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THE

WHITE CANOE:

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAKE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "SILENT HUNTER."

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by
BEADLE AND COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

THE WHITE CANOE;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAKE

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST GRIEF.

It was evening. A tired warrior slept soundly in the corner of his wigwam, while his squaw, patient creature, watched, alternately employing herself in preparing a meal for her husband and master when he woke, and in soothing the somewhat uneasy slumbers of a dusky infant that lay near to her side.

The scene was one of unusual character for the wilds. The hut wore a neat and cleanly appearance. Formed of poles, with buffalo-bides and deer-skins for its covering, its sides were ornamented with a variety of the rude pictures that savage art loved to trace upon the rough materials which nature offered them. Bows, arrows, lances with flint-heads, tomahawks similarly formed, were hung profusely around, while piles of fur—the spoils of the deer, bear, and other animals of the forest and prairie, spoke much for the industry and courage of the youthful warrior.

The Indian who slept so soundly was of no mean rank in his tribe. His father had been the most renowned of those who led the forces of the Comanches in their gallant struggles with the Apaches and other hereditary foes, and the Silent Stream had not degenerated from the high bearing of his race. At one and twenty he was already revered in the councils of the nation, as one who, bold and daring in the fight, was yet cautious in debate, and never advocated war, unless upon just cause of complaint against the foe. This gravity of demeanor and peaceful spirit was in some measure to be ascribed to the influence of his wife, whose great superiority to the women of her tribe was matter of notoriety to all.

Eleah was no Comanche maiden. The royal blood of the great Montezumas flowed in her veins, and her education was the best which Mexican civilization then admitted. It was while on a tour with her father, in one of the northern provinces of Mexico, that the young Mexitli became the captive of the Indians, who, after a severe and sanguinary incursion far within the enemy's territories, had brought home but this one trophy of victory.

Recovering from the stunning blow which his great loss had inflicted, her father for many months tried to obtain tidings of his child, and at length sought the camp of the Black Feather, a celebrated Apache chief, and with him entered into a warlike compact, having for its object an attack upon the Comanches, by an incursion into their fastnesses.

The Apache, lured by his lust for blood, readily consented to furnish one hundred and fifty bold warriors, himself at their head, and arranged to join Armillo at the head of half as many well-armed Mexicans, at an early moment.

Thus, even as the wretched maid contemplated her misery, this party was on its way to rescue her if living, to avenge her if dead.

This Black Feather had seen the Mexican Flower in her ranche home above El Paso; her grace and beauty had haunted him wherever he went. He therefore had another purpose in joining Armillo, besides that of fighting his hereditary enemies, the Comanches: he would, if Eleah was rescued, endeavor to make her his wife!

Armillo would not consent to this; but what of that? Were not his warriors in the majority, and could he not carry off the white maid?

Eleah, a captive and helpless, knew her fate. Though they had lost many braves in the foray, the fierce Comanches had no male victims to sacrifice to their manes, and on whom to wreak the ferocity of their festive orgies. They mourned their dead, and revenge prompted them to reserve this unfortunate young girl for the stake and for the torture.

Every preparation was made. The tree to which the victim was to be bound was barked and painted. Splints of wood, hot flints, barbed arrows, and every instrument of savagery, were prepared to torture that form of beauty,

whose very helplessness would have moved the minds of any but men whose education and habits had schooled them to look upon an enemy, of whatever sex, but as a wild beast.

At this moment, when the gentle being, who stood watching the progress of her executioners, had allowed her head to droop upon her bosom in utter hopelessness, and her strength failing,

“on the grass her dainty limbs did lay,”

Isaonie, the Silent Stream, stood forward. He had seen and admired her from the first; it is probable, however, that his disinclination to interfere with the accustomed usages of his people would have restrained him, but for the exquisite grace, the gentle, beseeching look of that lovely girl, as, escaping from the hands of her torturers, she fell upon the sward. The young chief, parting the throng, advanced to the spot where the victim lay, and standing erect beside her, spoke:

“The wigwam of the Silent Stream is empty. He sees a fair girl—she is his wife. I have said.”

With these words he raised the inanimate form of the girl in his arms, and amid the universal disappointment of his fellows, bore her away to his lodge, where, as soon as she was recovered, he eloquently and successfully pleaded his cause.

Singularly enough, though some little time elapsed between the date of her arrival in the Comanche camp and that of her intended execution, and though Eleah and Isaonie saw one another daily, they learned to love one another with all the strength of true affection only after marriage. But this affection, which was of slow growth, was the more deeply rooted, and they were united not only in name but in heart. Eleah obtained unbounded influence with her savage lord, the more that her superior education and enlightenment enabled her to gain as much of his reverence as of his love. Never, perhaps did man obtain a more devoted and lovely mate; and peace, happiness and tranquil pleasures dwelt in the wigwam on the banks of the little mountain stream.

Eleah became a mother. A sweet infant of some twelve months lay sleeping by her side—her joy, her little world, her mine of riches, whence she drew unnumbered treasures for the amusement and gratification of her husband. Eleah was proud of her diminutive warrior, and saw in his eyes, his face,

in every feature, signs of meaning and moment, which no one else could see ; because, perchance, they looked not for them, but which it delighteth every mother to trace in her babe.

And Isaonie ? He, too, schooled his wild nature to delight in the infantine graces of his boy, as much from native instinct as in obedience to the extraordinary power which the enlarged mind of his wife unwittingly obtained over him. At eventide, when the tired hunter came from the chase, he was sure to be greeted with the discovery of some new beauty in his son, some imperceptible progress toward speaking, or walking, some smile of meaning, invisible save to the keen mother's eye—some resemblance in nose or mouth, in eye or chin, in foot or knee, to his father. Deep treasure of love indeed is this absorbing affection—a bright spark amid much that is gloomy and sad in this world.

And they were happy, Eleah and Isaonie. They had all that, in their situation, they could desire. Their wants were easily and amply supplied—their home was a temple devoted to mutual endearments and joyousness. The husband was looked up to as the greatest warrior in his tribe, while Eleah was regarded as something very superior to what had ever before been seen in a Comanche village.

As for little Neosho—though doubtless no one else thought much of him—he was, at least in the sight of one, something much greater and more important than all.

That evening Isaonie had returned from the chase silent and moody. He laid down his bow and arrows without a word, while an Apache slave brought in the welcome deer's meat and handed it quietly to Eleah.

The wife, alarmed, and fearing that some warlike expedition was about to tear her husband from her side, would, with gentle solicitude, have questioned him, but he, evidently desirous of evading any explanation, pleaded unusual toil in the chase, and, casting himself upon a heap of skins, was soon, in reality, in a deep sleep. Eleah, somewhat relieved, proceeded with her own hands to dress the simple fare which usually composed their evening meal, and this task completed, she calmly awaited the hunter's waking. She could not, however, forbear noticing that Isaonie slept as he was not wont to sleep. There was a restlessness of his features, and

opening of the eyes, a compression of the lip, and a hard, irregular breathing, which made the wife scrutinize him with some anxiety.

Presently, however, the child started from its broken slumbers, and by its shrill and impatient cries drew the mother's attention, who proceeded to still its little passion by the method potent in every corner of the world.

When Eleah again turned toward her husband, he was seated before the little fire, whose embers cast a ruddy glow upon all around, his eyes fixed on vacancy, and his every feature exhibiting intense anxiety.

"Isaonie," said Eleah, "the sun has rained fire on your head. You are not well. Speak to your Mexic girl. She will seek herbs in the forest, and make a cunning drink that will send the evil one far away."

Isaonie started, and trembled from head to foot.

"A warrior," he replied, in tones that, despite his efforts, quivered with suppressed emotion—"A warrior is never a woman. Isaonie has killed two horses in the chase, and he is weary."

"Let him eat," said Eleah, placing before him a platter of smoking viands, with a sweet, half-reproachful, half-coaxing smile on her face, "and then he will ask his boy if he loves to hear his father's voice."

The warrior replied not, nor did he by word or look seem to notice this appeal to his paternal feelings, in an allusion to his usual amusement of an evening, when none but his wife could see, of playing with his child, and by every idea which mirth and good spirits could suggest, make the little thing roar with laughter.

"Isaonie," said the wife, after a pause, during which her eyes were fixed upon the somber countenance of her husband, whose eyes, wont before to court her glance, were now studiously oblivious of her presence—"Isaonie, some grief sits upon your heart. A foe has called you to the battle-field, and you would go, but grieve to leave your wife and little one."

"Eleah," said the warrior, mournfully, "the heart of Isaonie is sad. His father is angry with him; he calls him to the happy hunting-grounds of his people."

"Nay, and leave your babe?" inquired the young wife, reproachfully.

"Ugh!" said the chief, hushing his voice to a whisper "the White Spirit will hear a voice she knows not, and she will turn from Isaonie."

"What spirit?—of what does the husband of Eleah speak?"

"Has Eleah never heard the legend of the White Canoe?"

"Eleah has not heard, but Isaonie will tell it," said the wife, delighted to draw her husband from the gloomy thoughts which seemed to overcome his soul. Thus solicited, the young chief spoke:

"Many years ago a young daughter of our tribe died on the day of her wedding. The heart of her young warrior was black as night, and he resolved to join her. The old people told of a path that led to the land of souls, and the warrior said that he would follow it. His journey was long and great. Over hill and valley, through frost and snow he went, until he came to an eternal spring, and then he found himself on the banks of a broad lake. He found a canoe of shining white stone tied to the shore, with shining paddles. He was brave, and he entered. The warrior crossed the lake, and there he found her he had sought. She was white as milk, and fair as the swans on lake Za-za-pi."

"Well?" said Eleah, a slight choking sensation in her throat.

"Isaonie was this day in the wood; he hunted very hard, for he knew that his little boy was hungry, but he grew very tired, and sitting down in the forest fell asleep. A sound near him made him start, and he saw standing near him a girl, tall like the pine, handsome as the wild deer, and white like the young girl in the better land. It was the White Spirit."

"Did it speak?"

"Isaonie heard it cry out, and then it went behind the trees, and the warrior was alone."

"Father of Neosho," said the young Mexican, who had had some slight contact in youth with the Catholic priests of Mexico, "it was the lady which the pale-faces worship, or it was a dream."

"Isaonie saw with his eyes, he heard her step, and he

feels that he is called to the better land. To-night he will start, he will seek for the path, he will find the better land, and then—”

“What says the Silent Stream?” inquired Eleah, observing that her husband paused.

“I have said.”

Isaonie was about to have added, “Isaonie will see once more the White Spirit,” when he recollected to whom he was speaking.

The truth was, that the young Comanche, under the influence of sudden wakening, had been struck with a feeling in connection with this unknown being which was difficult to be explained. He had been startled in a violent manner, and his heated imagination bringing to his recollection the well-known tradition of his tribe, his mind was in a state of complete bewilderment.

Such sudden influences are by no means uncommon, especially to the quick sensibilities of a savage. The feeling which the Comanche experienced was a compound of sudden passion with the dread that a supernatural appearance would rouse in the mind of one whom no real danger could appall. So strong, indeed, had been the Indian's conviction that one not of this earth had crossed his path, that he had not even used the customary precaution of examining the track which a human visitor might have left, but had straightway bent his course toward home.

During his somewhat protracted walk, the Comanche had, by dint of thinking over the occurrence, worked himself up into a kind of frenzy, which attained its height as he entered the wigwam, where so many quiet pleasures hitherto had been in store for him. He felt that in dwelling upon the stranger woman, whose advent had troubled his existence, he was committing a fault, and one which Eleah would be least of all disposed to forgive him—she who loved so well.

Nothing indisposes us so much toward another, be it wife relative or friend, as the knowledge that we have wronged them. This is a universal truth, and although Isaonie had not wronged his wife in reality, nor reasoned very philosophically on the matter, he felt an uneasy sensation within him which predisposed him not to bear even with reproaches

He received none. Eleah saw clearly that some foreign influence was working upon her husband's mind; she could scarcely understand how or in what way that influence had been exerted, but she hoped and trusted that it was a temporary one, which, when the excitement of the moment was past, would be but as the baseless fabric of a vision. With these thoughts in her mind, the course of Eleah was plain, and she resolved to follow it, without allowing the feelings naturally uppermost to have sway.

"And what will Isaonie do? Will he seek the better land? Will he journey to the lake in search of the White Stone Canoe?"

"He will go, and he will find the White Spirit, and he will learn what things are done in the better land."

"And Eleah and Neosho?"

"My people are great; the wigwams of the Comanches are many, and they will care for Eleah and Neosho while Isaonie is away."

"And will Isaonie ever return to his people?" said Eleah, fixing her large, sad eyes on the chief's face.

"The Manitou of the Comanche is good; he knows."

"And which way does the great chief of his tribe travel?"

"To the setting sun, straight as an arrow from the bow of the hunter."

With these words the Silent Stream, whose eye had all the wildness of one whose brain was slightly affected, rose, took his choicest bow and arrows, and his favorite tomahawk, and then bidding his wife adieu, after kissing his infant, left the wigwam.

And Eleah! She sat for some time, stunned, as it were by the blow, which, coming on her so suddenly, had in one instant robbed her of that peace and happiness which hitherto had been uninterruptedly hers. She could clearly see that it was some woman, whether spirit or of human origin, who had disordered her husband's mind thus unexpectedly, and with her strong intellect, there was no hesitation in placing it to the account of human influence. After a few minutes' thought, Eleah rose, wrapped up and fed the infant, and then throwing a bearskin cloak over her shoulders, also left the wigwam, the child clasped close to her bosom.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEDICINE-MAN.

It was dark night when Eleah left the wigwam in the great Comanche village. In her arms she bore her sleeping child, on whom she fastened a look of fascinated affection—the more deep, the more strange, that she momentarily had no other love to depend on. Her way, when without the rude stockade which surrounded the village, was to the forest. Following a beaten and marked track which led toward a glen, Eleah soon found herself beneath the shadows of the trees, which made the previous gloom more heavy. But she observed it not; her mind was set upon one object, and from habit treading the trail in the right direction, she took no heed of nature.

As she neared an open glade in the forest, the clouds which shaded the sky gradually dispersed, and by a not uncommon phenomenon, the night turned almost into day. The moon and stars, the trees, became visible through the clear ether, the former shining beneficently on all around, the latter silvered by the chastened light, which disclosed the exact scene in search of which the young Mexican had bent her steps.

It was a glen, wild and rude, but picturesque, as glens ever are in the American wilderness. At the foot of a long series of hills, it appeared the gate of the mountains, but through its tangled and half-withered shrubbery there was no passage. To the right was a reach of half-barren prairie, where the sparse clusters of rugged woods, the undergrowth of shriveled herbage, gave ample token of the general sterile character. In the center was a strong level of sand, broken with rude mounds of a dull species of rock; the very air was deserted, for not even the hum of a solitary insect was heard sailing upon the night-breeze. To the left were pine groves, in small clumps, clinging to the base of the mountains; while in the glen itself, low bushes, dense foliage, and a faint odor of summer flowers, which penetrated the atmosphere, gave mark of superior fertility.

The entrance to the dell was narrow—between two perpendicular rocks, over one of which towered a decayed tree, denuded of its bark and verdure, and hanging out its rugged and sapless branches in the air.

Eleah passed rapidly beneath, and gaining a track which led upward, caught sight at that instant of a blazing fire, which, though the beacon that pointed to the spot she sought to gain, made her pause, for by its light she gazed on more than she wished to see. A winding path up the wooded face of the hill led to the mouth of a small natural cavity. On a platform in front of this was a fire, and by the fire stood two men. A second glance satisfied Eleah that it was her husband whose face was turned toward her.

She paused. It was not him she sought, for between them there now was a broad gulf of separation, too narrow which had been the object of her visit that night, and what she had to do and say could not be done in his presence. Again, therefore, Eleah turned into the wood, and, seating herself in silence, awaited her husband's departure.

Bowing her head over the sleeping babe, she relapsed into deep thought. Her mind, which had received a severe shock, appeared to wander; visions hateful and threatening glanced before her eyes; and then a half-slumber, more hateful than waking, came over her. It is probable that it would have ended in her falling into a heavy sleep, but that, at the critical moment, she heard the descending steps of Isaonie, who, next instant, passed close to her side, with that solemn step which the Indian of rank ever assumes, and which singularly became the warrior's mood of mind.

Eleah roused herself, recollecting her errand. She was about to visit, for a strange purpose, one who had wooed her in days past, one who had loved her ere she left her native home, and of whose love she had never been conscious until she was wedded wife of another. Had, however, the suitor's secret been less well kept, there would have been little hope for him.

Seotitlan was one of those strange natures, half fool, half cunning, which puzzles all generations, and who, among savage nations, meet with profound respect. To his half-vacant mind and singular cunning, Seotitlan added a devoted simpli-

eity, which was touching in the extreme. Having escaped the massacre of those who accompanied Eleah, he was able to discover that she was an Indian captive; and at once, on foot, and without arms, but guided only by the track of the retreating Comanches, he had followed, with the determination of sharing her fate; and with that faint hope, which had ever been present to his half-crushed intellect, he reached Camp Comanche, and his infirmity protecting him, lingered around and protected Eleah.

She married Isaonie, and it was some time ere young Seotitlan understood the full force of the tie which united the lovers. When he did, some extraordinary influence was exerted within him. His mind, wrapped hitherto in semi-darkness, expanded. The shock which disordered his frame, strengthened his intellect, and the half-witted Mexican awoke to a full sense of the bitterness of disappointed affection. He at once left the camp, and, taking up his abode in a solitary cave, in the glen we have described, refused communion with his fellow-men.

After a time, whispers went round the village that a great medicine was among them, and the glen was looked upon as a spot tenanted by one who could control the elements, and hold communion with the Great Spirit. Old and young braves seeking distinction in war; councils of the nation desiring the genial shower to fall from heaven; girls wishing to know their fate in love; wives who doubted their husbands; in a word, all persons, ages and sexes, who sought to dive into futurity, or to influence the heavenly powers, came to the weird Mexican.

Proud of his importance, Seotitlan waxed mighty in his own opinion, and finished by accepting the character which was originally imposed upon him. Nor did he regret his assumption of necromantic honor. Marvelous was the ease and enjoyment that ensued, for the devotees at his shrine never came empty-handed.

Eleah now advanced up the path which led to his cave, her mind agitated by many emotions. The way was rude and rough, but she noticed it not.

"Is Seot not to sleep to-night?" said the hermit, in a grumbling tone; "who comes to disturb him again?"

The distressed wife made no reply, but, advancing to the platform, stood in front of the necromancer.

"Eleah!" said he, in wild and passionate tones; "what seeks Eleah with the medicine-man?"

The girl, who was weary, moved nearer to him, placed her child on his knees, and then seated herself beside her old lover.

"Eleah seeks not the medicine-man of the Comanches, but he seeks the old friend who, in days gone by, swore to protect and guard his then young playmate."

"Eleah has a husband, now a great warrior; why asks she not him?" And as he spoke these words, the outcast of love glared fiercely on the saddened girl, seeing in her one who had robbed him of peace and hope.

"The face of her brave is dark; it is turned from Eleah; it sees her not. A bad spirit has entered him, and he knows not his wife or child."

Seot, as he was familiarly called, rose, and clasping the babe in his arms, placed himself before the young wife. His face was radiant with reanimated hope, his intellect, which each day grew stronger, though ever wayward and uncertain, beamed through his large, dark eyes, as he bent them, with touching sadness, on her he loved so well.

"Child of the señora plain," he said, "the God of our fathers has spoken. Huatzapill wills not that the Mexitli should wed with the wild savage of the deserts. He has been quiet long, but his breath is hot, and it burns at last. Let Eleah hearken to him, and fly to the home of her youth."

"Brother, child of the same race," replied the other, sadly, "I am a wife. I seek to bring back a husband, and a father to his babe. Eleah thought that Seot would be her friend; she is wrong, and she will now seek the Silent Stream alone."

"Eleah," exclaimed the hermit, "Seot hears the voice of the young Mexitli maiden. He is her slave—let her speak."

And with a dejected and hopeless mien, Seot prepared to listen and obey.

Eleah briefly told her tale—how, charmed by some unknown influence, and acting under the impression that he had seen the spirit of the White Stone Canoe, her husband had

departed from her, like Zadik, in search of the waters of oblivion, wandering he knew not whither, in

“quest of something,

Something he could not find, he knew not what.”

Her belief, she said, was, that he was scarcely in his right senses—that over-exertion had temporarily deranged him, and, accordingly—her whole soul bent on her marital duties—she intended to tread in his footsteps, watching over him unobserved, and ready, at the proper moment, to assume the responsibility of wife, or nurse, or friend, as the occasion required. To do this, it was necessary for her to be accompanied, as, with a child in her arms, and unused to the life of the woods, it would have been impossible alone to have performed her task. The companion she looked to was Seotitlan.

Nor did he disappoint her, when, in sad tones, she told her tale and implored his coöperation, with all the eloquence of which she was master. To his simple and unaffected mind Eleah was ever the same—the friend of his childhood, his playmate, his sister; and if a momentary desire to tear her from one who monopolized too much of her society did show itself, it was as faint as the first blush of morn, and as evanescent. It was, therefore, agreed, that they together should track the footsteps of the warrior, and act as events should induce them.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNTAIN CAMP.

ABOUT twenty miles from the Comanche camp was situated a spring of remarkable beauty. Taking its rise in the cleft of a rock, it fell, clear and pellucid, into a hollow, formed, doubtless, by the ceaseless fall of the water, where it made a pool, bottomed by the golden sand, which could be counted grain by grain through the pure element. Round about, shading and cooling the fountain, were trees of varied form and hue. Here the live oak, stunted, gnarled, and ever green—

the crowning aurel, the proud and erect cedar, and the Indian yew. From the fountain, along each side of the rill, which thence bubbled o'er and ran toward the plain below, lay soft, green meadows, where the deer loved to dwell, cropping the luxuriant grass, and sheltered from the noontide heat by little clumps of mesquit and other bushes, 'neath which these antelopes of the American wilderness crept, confiding and wearied. Deep imbedded in the soft turf, the hunter would find their hoof-marks, warning him that game was near at hand while the pelican, the stork, and the croaking crane kept tune-ful chorus near every spot where rank vegetation denoted the presence of marsh or streamlet.

Some half-dozen turkey-buzzards, sailing high aloft, and whirling round in long-continued circles, proclaimed that near the fountain was prey which they hoped to fall upon, but were restrained from attacking by the presence of human beings. The wild turkey and the squirrel were simultaneously in motion, the one flying from his roosting-tree in search of morning food, the other commencing his gambols on the top of a half-dead sycamore, where but scanty foliage hid him from sight. The screeching night-owl, scared by the break of dawn, flew hooting to his solitude.

The group which had located itself near the fountain was a strange one to be found in such a place and at such a time, so many hundred miles from the outermost boundaries of civilization and the whites, who, as yet, had not become known, except by distant report, to the Comanche Indians. Round a diminutive fire, which served to cook an early meal, sat three persons: a white man, a young girl, and a negro. The former was about thirty—a handsome man, with, however, many a sign of strong passions, and the outlines which time ill-used gradually increases to marked features in the face of its votaries.

This man had buffeted the world somewhat fiercely, and had received many an ugly blow in his turn, though, as youth still backed him up audaciously, he had as yet not fixed on him the seal which sooner or later stamps the face when we have lived our years too quickly.

The young girl was the very reverse; she seemed far more youthful than she really was; her face was lovely and rosy,

like a summer's morn, with a complexion—shall we say—like the golden streaks of dawn shaded by the retiring cloud of night? No! but a complexion of that pure white and red which has often caused the New England women to be compared to their own apples. Had she been an Indian, we should certainly have pleaded a poetical license, and said that her eyes were like the first star of the evening, and her flesh soft as the marten's skin; or we might have compared her bosom to the dark, heaving waves, after a storm; her breath to the most exquisite fumes of tobacco; and the touch of her lips to the intoxicating charms of brandy itself, all which would have been in keeping with Indian notions. As, however, she was an English girl, we must restrain our fancy, that loveth to roam free as air, and content ourselves with saying that she was beautiful.

The negro was aged and withered. Many summers and many winters had scorched and frozen his ebony hide, but they had reached only the outside; they had not dried up either his sympathies or his affections.

The man sat gazing at the girl with an expression difficult to define. It was admiration, if not love, but marked by so settled a determination, that it was clearly no affection to be coveted or prized. It was a love which was not expansive, taking in the object of love and cherishing it—not a love which tended to the beloved's happiness, as the first and great object. Self was in every glance of his eye, in which was to be read the proud satisfaction of a man who bears off a prize which others covet—the chief recommendation, perhaps, in his sight.

In her there was a deep, full richness of confiding devotion; devotion which had as yet received no check, because the man's object was yet ungained.

Richard Seaton had stolen her from her parents, after an acquaintance of two months. Quick, impetuous and headstrong, he had so masked himself as to seem to her but ardent, a quality which enabled him to impose the more easily upon one so young, so innocent, as Amy Wilson.

Amy was sixteen, the only child of an aged father and mother. On a visit to an aunt in Austin, she had met Seaton, and when the time came for her to return to her parents, he

had, by entreaties, prayers, and lastly by threats against his own life, persuaded the girl to flee with him toward New Mexico, where they could be married and dwell awhile, while the family had time to become reconciled to their union.

Bitterly did Amy feel what she had done, though the hitherto respectful and gentle love of Richard had served to stifle the qualms of conscience, for well she knew that to an honorable suitor, in whose favor she had once declared, there would have been no opposition.

Ancient Job, the negro attendant, had followed her from her own wish, and from a feeling of singular affection. Job liked not Seaton, and Seaton knew it. In fact, the negro, who was not blinded by passion, could see that the reckless adventurer into whose hands Amy had fallen, intended nothing less than to wed her. His object, he felt sure, was to betray and abandon—a fate from which his presence alone, doubtless, had as yet preserved her.

It was much gained that Job suspected, for suspicion has eagle eyes, and pierces everywhere; it is also sleepless, watchful; for which Amy had to thank her God, who sent Job to watch and protect, where another had sworn a thousand times so to do.

“And our journey, Richard! how seem we to proceed upon it?” said Amy, after a pause which had been spent in consuming the morning’s breakfast.

“’Tis more than half over, if our horses last it bravely out,” he replied, carelessly.

“I am sorry for it.”

“Sorry?” said Richard Seaton, fixing his eyes keenly upon her, as if trying to find some hidden meaning in her words.

“Yes, sorry; for this life is most exquisite. It is a dreamy existence, in which, Richard, I could dwell forever. Pano-plied by heaven, recumbent on the flower-spangled turf, awoke each morn by the unfettered music from brake and brier and tree-top, lulled at night by the cooing and sighing of birds and branches, all day in communion of heart with one whom I shall soon have a right to love, with smiling nature all around, I could wish my journey had no end.”

“You would soon tire of your woodland fare,” observed Richard. “I have, already.”

"Then you love not truly," said Amy, with all the animation of a young girl. "What would you more than the fruits of the forest, the fish from the rill, and venison from the plain, with pure, fresh water and berries sweet?"

"All very delightful, Amy dear," replied Richard, with a laugh which covered a habitual sneer, "but I would give all the venison, fish and berries for a hot steak, a foaming tankard, and the et-ceteras of a tea-board."

"Fie, Seaton," said Amy, with a half-sad shake of the finger, as his words conjured up the once happy picture of her father's home, "you are unromantic."

"Not at all; and to prove it you, we will remain in this delicious shade all day; while Job fishes I will hunt around, without ever being far from call. You can remain here with Cæsar and the horses, which need refreshment."

"But you will not leave me long, Richard?" said Amy, poutingly.

"Not long," replied Richard, turning away.

"Job fish down da," said the negro, pointing to a stream about half a mile distant.

"Yes," continued the other, "it is a rich bottom, and will give good perch and mountain trout—a glorious dinner in prairie-craft, with juniper and chilis from the brake."

This arranged, the horses were removed from their night tether, having devoured all the grass within reach, to a fresh one, where the green herbage showed ample provision for the day. The huge dog, referred to under the name of Cæsar, lay confidingly at his mistress's feet, who had the further protection of a gun, to be fired in case of alarm. These dispositions being made, Job took his tackle, and having seen that all was right, started off in his shambling way toward the stream that flowed through the meadow, while Richard, taking his rifle, plunged into the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARRIOR'S VISION.

MEANWHILE Isaonie, having, under the influence of his excited and diseased feelings, traveled many hours, had, at break of day, looked round for some spot where to repose his wearied frame, already suffering from the mental fever that had invaded him. Connecting, as he now always did, water with the place where he should meet the White Lily and her mysterious canoe, wherein he was to be wafted to the Better Land, the Comanche made for a stream which ran in a deep channel through the plain. Being desirous of screening himself from the increasing heat of the sun, the Indian chief clambered down the almost perpendicular bank of the river, just where a large pool was formed, in which leaped and swam many a spangled fish, and here prepared to seek repose. The bank shelving in some three feet, left that space between the water and the kind of cliff, which overhung the diminutive lake—a most cool and refreshing grotto.

To Isaonie it was a delicious bower, where he could find rest after a night of mental and physical fatigue. He therefore determined to pass the day therein, and continue his journey after the day's heat was over.

Loosing his tomahawk, and stretching himself along the edge of the water, he proceeded at once to court the power which dispenses sleep.

But memory was busy, and thought, the sleep-killer, was active within him. He thought of his young and innocent wife, of his little boy, whose gambols and infantine graces, whose rosy lip and golden curls he never more missed than at that moment. Stern and angry was the warrior's glance, as he reflected that no more should he feel his little waxen arms around his neck, nor hear his lisping words and joyful shout, in glad welcome, when he came home at night; and up would he have sprung, to rush back upon the Comanche camp, when there rose the picture of the White Lady, dim

and indistinct, before him ; and again the young chief relapsed into deep thought—not this time of his wife or boy.

He had been thus engaged for a few moments, endeavoring in his own mind to give body and shape to the mysteries which surrounded him, when there came, faint and murmuring on his ear, the far-off sound of paddles on the water. It was but as the rustling of a leaf, as the sighing of the wind, and yet to his ear it was audible.

Breathless with anxiety, struck with the conviction that his time of triumph was come, the Indian chief remained motionless, listening with charmed senses to the sound which had so aroused him. On it came, first distant, as if it were the faintest note of fairy music, then swelling organ-like, and to him filling all space and being. It was as no human paddle, so regular, so measured, so fragrant of divine perfume in its very dip was it, that the Indian's heart beat with renewed violence.

Then, with a sweep and rush of music, it came in sight, rounding a corner, and parting with exquisite and gentle murmur the unruffled waters, which, undulating away to the right and left, made a vast and always increasing wake, until tiny waves, dancing to the sound of the oars, on the flowery banks marked the extreme verge of the boat's influence.

It was the White Stone Canoe !

Shining like pure alabaster, white as the flaked snow that sleeps on the top of Andes, untrodden by any foot, on it came.

It was of stone, while its elegant paddles were of the same material and color, sea-shells and coral forming the rowlocks, while the thwarts were of cedar and cinnamon.

In the boat sat the White Lady, and such a fairy creature no pencil ever drew or pen described. Airy and light, changing, chameleon-like, her varied charms at every fresh glance, there was a spiritual essence about her which no poet nor painter could ever seize, while around her spread a halo of light, illumining lady, bark and water.

Isaonie grew faint and sick. Such loveliness, such charms, were not for him. Who has not felt, who has not known, this lover's worst torture ! To see one possessed of every grace of form and soul, one who we know would shed pearls

as she trod upon our path, one whose voice is music, whose eye is power, and then, in the little humble cell of the soul, to experience the consciousness that such is too rich a prize for us, such is the torture of him who is timid in love.

So with Isaonie. The object for whom he had left wife, and child, and home, was before him; he could see, he could hear her, but a gulf, apparently immeasurable, was between them.

Presently, however, the fair being approached him, and with a smile that was—heaven forgive her!—cast upon him but to show the exquisite regularity and whiteness of her teeth, she spoke, the words dropping like manna on his soul, from her ruby lips.

“Son of the Comanche, why seek you me? I am of another world; none can come to me who has not died on earth.”

“Being of a Better Land,” replied the chief, rising, “I can die. Isaonie is not a woman. His arm is strong, and he can strike, even himself.”

“Say not so, mortal,” she said, in alarm; “for if so, there were no place in the Better Land for thee.”

“My life is my own, gentle being.”

“Not so; it is Manitou’s. When he says, ‘Your time is come, Isaonie,’ then may you die, and not before. But you are good, you are brave—the Manitou may let you come to me;” and dropping her paddles, the White Lady, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, held out her hands toward the warrior.

At the very moment when Isaonie rose to advance toward the siren, a shriek, a plunge, a violent splashing of the water, made the warrior in reality start up. In the pool, clutching instinctively to his rod, was the form of the negro Job, while blood, escaping from his woolly head, suffused the surface of the water.

CHAPTER V

FOOD FOR FISHES.

JOB dearly loved angling. It was a good, lazy amusement, and laziness is a negro's paradise. He could sit for hours on the borders of a pool or stream, with his bait sunk beneath the surface of the water, his eye fixed vacantly on his float, and his old pipe in full play, to be hastily dropped by his side whenever there was a nibble. It is therefore not at all surprising that Job should have hurried, with no small satisfaction, to take up the position pointed out to him by Richard Seaton. It was some weeks since his piscatorial propensities had been brought into play, and he quite enjoyed the prospect.

Guided by the lofty trees which grew on the margin of the pool, Job turned his steps in the direction of the bank, beneath which Isaonie had been amusing himself with the luxury of dreaming, and, as luck would have it, ensconced himself exactly above the spot occupied by the Indian chief. Seating himself on the bank, the negro, in a very few moments, was dipping his line gently into the water, totally unconscious of the near proximity of the red-skin, the knowledge of which circumstance would have infallibly spoiled the black's very remotest chance of sport. Indeed, Job had a perfect horror of the Indian race, and his having as yet escaped coming into contact with them he looked upon as a special and decided dispensation of Providence in his favor.

Innocently enough, therefore, did the negro proceed to follow his still and patient occupation, luxuriating in the excellent locality he had fallen on, and in his little black pipe, which had been the constant companion of his wanderings. After a while, however, not a single bite disturbing the even current of his thoughts, he reverted to Amy, and so warm were his feelings as to find vent in indistinct mutterings.

"Drat dat ugly Massa Seaton, and de day he ebber see Miss Amy! Carry a ole nigger dis a way ober de wurd! He no

good. I 'stinguish dat long time 'go. But him got a nigger too deep for him, I 'spec'. He marry Miss Amy, de sassy t'ief. He nebber marry her; him ole nigger not blind, and him see well enough what dat man want. But, before he deceive Miss Amy, he hab to kill ole Job. Drat dem fish, dey in no p'tikler hurry to bite."

Job here raised his bait out of the water, and dropped it again a few feet from where it was before.

"What can a Miss Amy see in dat chap? He ugly as de berry debble, and not half so handsome as Sip," (the old negro's son); "wonder she not take a fancy to 'im. Eh, what dat?" he added, as he seemed to hear a slight rustling to his right; "dat a painter, or a red-skin, I'm t'inking."

Job here exerted his listening faculties to the utmost, but failed in catching sign or sound of any living being. All was still, serene, and calm. It was a place for good men to be alone with God, and where no evil, one would have thought, could have been planned or imagined. After a brief pause, which satisfied the black that he had been mistaken, he continued:

"Well, Job, wunder when Dick Seaton show him clobber foot. Berry soon, I 'spec', if Job out ob de way. 'Yah! yah! he no like a ole nigger, dat certain."

And Job gave a self-satisfied chuckle at his own importance—Miss Amy having, as he thought, been alone preserved from ruin and abandonment by his presence.

At this moment, when Job's faculties became intently absorbed in his pursuit—a fish having nibbled cautiously at the bait—another actor presented himself on the scene. At about seventy yards' distance was a copse, and from this a man peered forth, gazing at the negro with intense anxiety. In his hand was a rifle, which gradually was lowered, taking aim toward the black. At length it reached the proper level; but, instead of being discharged, it was again placed on the man's shoulder. A small bush, about three feet to the right of old Job, intercepted the aim, and made a shot from that distance doubtful, which, as the negro was well armed, the intended assassin by no means cared should be the case.

Treading lightly, the skulker gained the bushes which skirted the edge of the pool and was about to glide along

them toward the black. A movement on his part, however, caused the other to sink low, and under the friendly cover of the boughs to lie concealed.

Job, having hooked and captured a fine bass, had risen from his sitting posture, with his legs dangling over the edge of the cliff, and was busily engaged in removing the fish, and then in putting fresh bait upon the instrument of destruction.

"Dat a monsus fine fish, I 'spec' Miss Amy make a big suppa ob dat, I'm t'inking."

With these words, the negro again seated himself, dipped his line into the rippling and fruitful water, on which the sun began to pour somewhat warmly, making every bubbling wave sparkle diamond-like beneath its cheering beams; then, resuming his old pipe, the black relapsed into contemplative serenity.

Again the man rose, and stooping low, crept toward the unsuspecting Job with serpent-like caution. The hand of the intended assassin grasped his rifle; his nostrils were dilated, as if snuffing blood afar off; his lips were compressed with a fierce determination, that told of no mercy.

Poor Job, quietly watching the play of his float, which was again agitated by the ravenous propensities of the fish below, had all his senses directed to the capture of the scaly foe. The man looked down into the pool, and a smile came over his pale face as he saw how accident had seconded his views. The necessity for shooting the negro was past. The cliff was high and the pool deep. A stunned man would be surely drowned therein.

"Drat dat fish!" said Job, "he be berry like Dick Seaton. He slippery, you nebber know whar to hab him."

"You have him now," muttered the other, and at the same moment the butt-end of his rifle striking the black on the back of his head, he staggered forward, turning instinctively round as he did so, and gazing—it seemed, however, unconsciously—on his assassin. He fell with a heavy plunge into the placid pool beneath.

Seaton stood an instant, as if rooted to the ground, and then, turning, hurried swiftly from the spot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INDIAN AND THE NEGRO.

THE first impulse on the part of Isaonie, when he returned to consciousness, was to spring into the water, and bear the bleeding and half-insensible negro to the shore. This was effected without much difficulty, as the chief was an expert swimmer. He then laid the black on the bank, and gazed at him with undisguised astonishment. His ebony skin, thick lips, and woolly hair, were novelties which struck the excited Indian's fancy most forcibly, and he began at once to connect this new apparition with his already heated imaginings. Job, however, though stunned, was reviving, and in a few moments sat up, gazing with affrighted mien at the red-skin.

"Why, Injin, mus' dis nigga t'ank you for him life?" he said, doubtingly.

Isaonie shook his head, in token that he did not understand him. Job was puzzled, but ere he attempted any other mode of communion, feeling faint and dizzy, he had recourse to the flask that hung at his side. Raising it to his lips, Job drank a strong draught, and then, his eyes glistening and even sparkling with the strength of the spirit, he handed it to his new friends. The chief, quite innocent of any knowledge of its contents, but incapable of refusing—as against all prairie etiquette—imitated the black's example, taking a huge gulp ere he was aware of the fiery character of the liquid.

The Indian was possessed of much of the stoicism of his race, but his astonishment, and the burning sensation in his throat, almost overcame his gravity. Restraining himself, however, he politely handed back the bottle, his surprise at his black acquaintance much enhanced, while he gave vent in deep guttural tones to the exclamation, "Ugh!"

Job, meantime, had been surveying the Silent Stream with no small curiosity; his half-naked form, his variegated paint, his peculiar arms, being all matters of deep interest to the negro, who, however, mindful of his peculiar position, hastened to

open a communication with his red-skin savior. Brushing up, therefore, his little stock of Mexican Spanish, learned in his early life on the Rio Grande, he addressed the chief in a dialect of which the Comanche had, fortunately, some knowledge, and then, delighted with his success, with wonderful volubility gave the other a succinct narrative of events up to the very instant of the murderous attempt of Seaton.

The Comanche listened with the utmost gravity, and when the negro had ceased, his answer proved how deeply rooted were the lessons which Eleah had taught, and how strong, though unknown to himself, was the influence of his gentle and suffering wife still upon his heart.

"Good!—dark friend brave—pale-face bad; the Silent Stream will join with his dark friend to guard the young lily."

Job was delighted, and confidence being thus established between them, a conference was held, which terminated in its being mutually agreed to track the would-be assassin, unknown to himself, to watch and discover what were his real intentions with regard to Amy, and then to act as circumstances suggested. This decided, they ascended the bank where it was practicable, and the negro, assuming his arms and tackle, not forgetting his captured fish, the strangely-assorted pair advanced toward the fountain camp.

It was not long ere they reached the neighborhood of the grove, when, after a moment's reflection, Job determined on his plan of operations, and having communicated them to the Indian, who was rapidly relapsing into his unsettled and melancholy mood, he acquiesced in all, and allowed the black to be his guide and leader.

Entering the thicket, which skirted the camp, Job, followed by Isaonie, advanced stealthily along, for the purpose, in the first instance, of reconnoitering. A few moments carried them through the wood, and to its very edge, where the black, and at his signal, the Indian, paused and peered out cautiously upon the open glade.

Close at hand, almost within reach of the negro's gun grazed the horses, which more than once pricked up their ears, as if an unwonted sound were disturbing their repast. For them, however, Job had no eye, as at no great distance sat Richard Seaton and Amy, in earnest converse.

"Fie, Richard!" said the girl, a blush of shame upon her ingenuous countenance: "go and leave poor Job! God grant he return safely to us. Apart from his life being precious, what would be said of me, wandering alone in the wilderness with a young man?"

"That you loved him very much, and despised the trammels and opinions of the world," said Richard.

"Richard," replied Amy, half alarmed by the evident hidden import of his words, and for the first moment beginning to feel an undefinable fear, which as yet took no shape, "I have sadly defied the opinion of the world already. I would do it no more. The presence of Job, who, when he nursed me, an infant child, was a gray-haired old man, is to me as the presence of an uncle—of a guardian. Out of his hand I will never go, until heaven has sanctified our union."

Richard Seaton smiled a smile, half of triumph, half of scorn, which Amy saw not, for her eyes were bent in burning confusion on the ground. Young, innocent as she was, there had been of late a strange frenzy, as it were, in her suitor's eye, which made her dread to be alone with him.

"But Amy, I say again," continued Seaton, "there are Indians in the prairies, and it is as much as our lives are worth to remain here. It is probable that Job already has fallen a victim to their fury."

"Heaven protect the good old man!" said Amy, passionately. "I will not move without him, until I know that he is really dead;" and the young girl shuddered fearfully at the thought.

"Job nebber mean to die," exclaimed the negro, advancing, "do dem cussed Injins berry near knock him head off. Ah! Miss Amy, old Job him precious tough, but de varmints berry near make him food for fishes. You all right, Massa Dick! W'ar you see de debble?" suddenly added the negro, turning round, and looking behind himself, as if in expectation that the monarch of the regions below were close at hand. "What for you scare a old nigga like dat? You look as if you see ebber so many debbles."

"Oh," said Richard, gasping out the word with a mighty effort, "I was only staring at the Indian yonder, who stands as if he were turned into stone."

Isaonie, in truth, was standing against a tree, the very picture of horror and astonishment. His eyes were almost starting from his head. In the lovely Amy Wilson, in the girl he had solemnly covenanted with the negro to watch over and protect, he recognized the original of the supposed vision in the forest.

He now felt the scales removed from his eyes. It was a child of the pale-faces with whom he had so suddenly fallen in love. Strange thoughts came over the Indian's soul. She was in his power, for within a short distance was the camp of his companions, and Isaonie, without moving, resolved in his mind how to act. Blinded by passion as he was, his course was very simple.

Meanwhile Job, in answer to hurried questions from Amy, and listened to with bewildered astonishment by Richard Seaton, recounted the events of the day. He told how he went down to the stream to angle, how he caught several fish, how he was more than once disturbed by a rustling in the bushes, which, however, he paid no serious attention to, and then he added :

"Me berry wrong, for dere war a needcessity for ebery caution. I war intending to a big varmint ob a fish, when I hearn a rustling. I no turn, for de fish was jist a-gwine to bite. I hook de fish, and den—" the negro paused, as if alarmed at the ghastly pallor of Richard Seaton. "What de matter, Massa Seaton? You hab bad mout' put on you—yon ill?"

"No," the other replied, sharply ; "I am tired and weary, hurting in the sun all day. Go on."

"Oh ! dat all? Job t'ink it ob more transaction dan dat. Well, Job, go on."

This was said with an emphasis which made the attempted murderer quiver with anxiety.

"Do, Job," said Amy, who herself was pale and thoughtful, for she reflected on her false position, and how much worse it would have been had the negro perished.

"I hook de fish, and just den I heard a whiz in de air, and 'fore I look to see w'ar him be, I feel a thump on a nigga head, just like a blacksmith hammer, and I fall ober into de ribba."

"And saw you not the assassin?" said Seaton, with a smile of relief.

"Yes!" replied the negro, fixing his eyes vacantly on the white man.

"And who was it?" inquired Amy, while her companion stooped to conceal the ghastly pallor of his visage.

"It war," said Job, still keeping his eyes fixed on Seaton, "a cussed cowardly varmint—"

Seaton raised his head angrily, but the negro met his glance with perfect stolidity—

"Ob a Wakker," continued the black, giving the credit of his attempted murder to a tribe of Indians known as the Waccos, and who dwelt in the vicinity.

"And how were you saved?" inquired Seaton, now quite at his ease.

"Dat 'spectable gen'l'm'n dar fish me out," said the negro. "And, more dan dat, he make bargain wid Job; he gwine guide us, so dat Miss Amy nebber be alone. When Job go hunt, Injin stop wid Miss Amy; when Injin go, Job stop. So you do jist as you like, Massa Seaton. You be de gen'l'm'n ob de party."

"Many thanks, my dear old Job," exclaimed Amy, with real satisfaction; "I shall never be able to repay your devotion."

"I really know not how sufficiently to reward you," said Seaton, grinding his teeth, while he set his wits to work to contrive some scheme of ridding himself of both his guides—for, once launched on the course of crime, he now hesitated not. So is it. The first step made, the others are easy. We can not have little sins. All are great, because they give the habit—because they, as it were, grease the wheel and set it going, and once on the smooth, deluding highway, 'tis hard to pull up at the half-way house.

Job being weak from loss of blood, it was determined to remain where they were until the morning, and as in the wild look of the sky, in the swift-flying clouds, and a peculiar vapor round the sun, there were signs of a storm, the whole party went diligently to work to frame a hut, which should protect them from the rain. The two slight wigwams, under a huge spreading sycamore, which had served the previous

night, were taken as the foundation, and with the addition of one or two stout poles, and a profusion of boughs, piled thickly on the roof, interspersed with the long rank grass of the prairie, seemed likely to prove quite sufficient to ward off the rude breath of the storm.

Gradually the sky darkened; and as the gloom settled around, the group drew nearer the fire, the Indian excepted, who, wrapping himself in his deer-skin cloak, sought the hollow of the sycamore, and there already slept, or feigned to sleep. Amy leaned against a huge log in saddened thought; Job, apparently unconcerned, smoked his pipe in silence; while Seaton, with lips compressed, eyes half shut, and hand clenched in his bosom, spent the hours vacillating between hope, fear, and ire, taking care never to have his eyes off the negro, of whose good faith, in the narrative of his attempted assassination, he had still lingering doubts.

At length the gobbling turkey was heard flying to roost, the sand-hill crane whipped screeching by, the wandering geese and swans soared over head, in search of quiet pond near at hand, while away in the recesses of the forest was heard the dismal howl of the prairie wolf, as it prowled about in search of prey. The croaking, too, of the horned frog, the buzzing of innumerable insects, broke the stillness, and then the mellow vesper voice of some sweet bird, rivaling the nightingale, told that night was come.

All obeyed the summons. Amy retired to her separate little hut, in a corner of which, however, Cæsar slept; Seaton, who was really exhausted, wrapped himself in a cloak, and soon was in the disjointed acts of a dream, while Job rose, and advancing to the side of Isaonie, who was awake, held communion with the Indian for some time.

CHAPTER VII.

NEOSHO.

It was not long ere the storm burst in tremendous fury upon the wide wilderness. The sky grew black, a lurid glow hung about the edge of the clouds, whose ragged outlines swept in elementine fury along; and then a flash, a burst of thunder, proclaimed that heaven's artillery was at work. In a few moments the rain fell in torrents; not quiet, gentle, drizzling rain, that takes its time to wet and discomfort you, but rain which, scorning delay, penetrated every garment at once, and left no doubt about the position of the sufferer. It was downright, in every sense of the word.

To the whole fury of this storm, stunned by the thunder, half blinded by the forked lightning, and soaked by the sheets of water that sluiced through the still air, was exposed Eleah, her child, and Seotitlan. When it first gave signs of its approach, they were in the open prairie, many miles from shelter. Before them was a grove of trees, at the foot of a hill, where Seot knew a cavern to exist, which he hoped to gain. Taking the babe, which slept, from its mother, and bidding her to follow, the Mexican hurried in the direction of the hill. Before, however, they were half-way, the storm burst.

"Go, Seot, leave Eleah, and bear her child to the cover of the trees."

"Seot can not leave Eleah," said the Mexican, calmly.

"Then the wet will reach the little bones of Neosho; he will perish, and Eleah will die," replied the young mother, sadly.

The wild medicine-man gave no answer, but springing forward, he flew rather than ran across the plain, in the direction of the trees, his head bent over the babe, to meet the brunt of the storm, and screen the child. The mother followed him with her eye, with a gratified smile, as she now knew that he would soon be under cover.

It was some time ere Eleah reached the forest, as the way was long, and she was weary in the extreme, her very feet being blistered with the unusual exertions of that day. Seotitlan had been long out of sight, and she might have found some difficulty in tracing his place of shelter, but that the grateful blaze of a huge fire guided her to the spot. She found the wizard intently engaged in feeding the flames with damp wood, which burnt with difficulty, though numerous half-burnt logs, within the cavern, assisted materially as a foundation. In the mouth of the cave sat Neosho, exhibiting in his infantine delight at the genial fire, every propensity to take upon himself, not for that once only, the character of a most decided cock, as he was crowing with glee, and evincing a strong determination of not going to sleep.

Eleah smiled, despite her sorrow, and well she might; for such a little treasure—God's best gift to the sore at heart—was in her case scarcely to be prized too highly. And she felt it, as every mother will feel, whatever her other cause of grief. But Eleah knew not that the storm had done its work, and had sown the seeds of disease, whose reaper is death. No, she knew it not; and sitting down beside him she gave way to all the happiness of frolicking with her innocent babe, forgetting for the moment all else in the wide world.

And Seotitlan having satisfactorily made up his fire, and drawn within the cave more than sufficient wood for the night, and prepared and served their scanty meal, came also to join the gambols of the boy, but too late. Ere an hour passed, the child hung its head in very weariness, and sunk off into a troubled and uneasy sleep. And the Mexican slept also, having vainly endeavored to carry on the merest shadow of conversation. Not so Eleah; the keen and far-seeing eye of holy maternity had detected in the flush of the boy's cheek, and the heaviness of his little eyes, that something was wrong, and all minor cares fleeing from her soul, she hung the life-long night over the child, for he was ill.

Morning came, and Neosho was in a burning fever, with short breathing, a cough, and every sign of suffering, from the storm of the preceding night. Strong in her agony, Eleah sat beside him, praying in her inmost soul to the God of her fathers, for on him she had alone to depend. No

human aid or appliance was nigh. There she sat, watching the slumber, or rather lethargy of sickness, moistening the fevered lips of the little sufferer with cold water from a rill at hand, suckling him when he would, and still praying ever the power of heaven.

The sun rose, the storm ceased, the birds sung merrily in the morning air, the hour of midday came, evening drew in apace, and still sat the mother at her task of woe, while Seotlan was utterly overcome at the agony depicted in her face. True he scoured the forest in search of game, and brought home his humble captures, and with many a word of persuasion and of reproach forced her to eat, but it was done mechanically, and without consciousness of aught save the keen misery of his companion.

Still the sufferer grew worse, and death seemed about to clutch his prey, for the child had long refused his mother's soothing breast, and lay in utter apathy to all around. Oh ! who shall tell the woe of that stricken parent, as she saw her all fading from her powerless grasp. Husband gone—and now the child of her bosom seemed all but fled. She that a few hours before had been all happiness and joy, was now plunged into the very depths of misery ; but she felt—such is the maternal devotion of woman—that could Neosho but be spared, all else was a mere trifle ; that she could welcome back Isaonie, and never ask where he had been the while ; that she could love and cherish him, the father of her boy, whatever her wrongs. But then he was about to die—this link of love, this frail and gentle thing, which in its wondrous gifts reminds us ever forcibly of God ; and she thought that soon she should be alone in the world. Alone !—and as she dwelt on this word, a cold shudder came over her soul, dark imaginings burst forth from their concealment. Did he die, she must live, were it but for revenge. Strange as it may appear, it is not the less true, that on the life or death of that young child hung suspended the destiny of its father. Did life gain the day, Eleah, in holy gratitude, would remain the loving, forgiving, the gentle wife ; but if death struck the balance, she knew no extent of hatred too great for him, the cause of her loss.

As some fierce lioness of the forest, surrounded by her

young, seeks not to harm the hunter, but, one of her cubs wounded, she becomes furious, and bursts like the war-dog upon him, so Eleah felt that the life of her child was to decide the victory of forgiveness, or of revenge.

But though death had as yet not finally set its seal upon the babe, the disease was making rapid progress, and Eleah saw no hope that to-morrow's morn would leave her still a mother. Seotitlan was unremitting in his attentions. He found fresh grass, where it had been well dried in the sun, for a soft bed for the little sufferer; he sought out refreshing herbs, and made them into a cooling liquid; he bathed the babe's lips and forehead unremittingly, and he brought fresh piles of wood to the entrance of the cavern. One grateful glance from Eleah's eye was all the reward he sought. But, not even this did he obtain, for, with the absorbing selfishness of sorrow, she scarce ever removed her gaze from him whose face was now her heaven of joy, her hell of agony and despair, as she verged upon hope or fear.

At sundown the rain commenced once more, and a short time poured as violently as ever, but without thunder or lightning. It was a stern, fierce shower, which had evidently made up its mind for a regular night of it. It was cold withal, and Seot piled log upon log, until there was a blaze like that of a blast furnace near the cavern's mouth, and pouring its ruddy influence on the surrounding trees. Presently, as they sat opposite one another, they were startled by the sound of voices, speaking close at hand, in a strange tongue.

"That fire must be near at hand," said an old man, in English; "I fear me, though, 'twill but betray us to the prowling savage."

"Or perhaps bring us upon *them*," exclaimed a younger voice, impetuously.

"Stranger wander in wood?" said Seot, loudly, without understanding a word; "it is cold, it is wet, let them come to the fire."

In a few moments, leading their horses, and wrapped in huge skin coats, there stood before them two men, who, without pausing to be asked a second time (and they seemed to understand the mixture of Indian and Mexican used by the

wizak), entered the cavern, having first tied their horses beneath some trees. All this time Eleah had not moved. The men, as soon as they reached the fire, after glancing with no little pleasure at the smallness of the party composing their entertainers, disencumbered themselves from their outer coats, and laid them, with their huge saddle-bags and arms, on one side. One was an aged man, about sixty, gray-haired and stern somewhat, the other a young and handsome lad, scarce twenty.

"We are fortunate," said the young man, "in this—"

"We are," replied the old man, interrupting him, "for there I see is a sick child, which will need all the cunning of my art. Thank God, I never travel without my medicine-chest."

The old man, who had journeyed among the Indians, and who expected to meet with much opposition to his measures from the prejudices of the red-skin girl, approached the mother and laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Daughter, your child is sick."

"Neosho is going to the land of spirits," replied the girl, sadly.

"Nay, daughter, not so. I am a medicine-man of the whites, and will try to save him."

"God of my fathers, has Eleah, then, been heard?" exclaimed the mother, rising and making way for the doctor, who, surprised at her ready acquiescence, took her place, and carefully examined the little sufferer.

"Will he die?" said the anxious mother, scrutinizing his face, as if to read there the fate of her child.

"Daughter, your child is very sick, but, with the blessing of God, he may not die."

Eleah was satisfied. There was hope, and while that existed to cling to, she could act with all the energy required. The doctor in a few moments administered a powerful remedy, and then advised the mother, for Neosho's sake, to take rest.

"Let his father watch; you must sleep."

"His father is not here," replied Eleah, passionately; "Eleah will watch."

"So young—a mother too," said the old man, starting

with horror, and gazing in visible disgust on man, mother, and child.

Eleah saw and understood his look, but she would not, even to remove the thought of shame to herself, say aught against her husband. But Seotitlan was less sparing of Isaonie, and he, when the old man returned to the fire, told the whole story, which was listened to with singular attention by both travelers. They even glanced meaningly at one another, conversed in a low tone, and indeed gave every sign of being struck by the information conveyed. After a brief pause they produced their supper, and sitting down upon the ground, proceeded to take the very necessary refreshment of an evening meal, while Eleah, without moving, her eyes heavy with sleep, sat watching, with unwearied care, the suffering child. The two strangers then retired to rude extempore couches, and were soon fast asleep.

Silence now brooded over the scene. Even Eleah, at length worn out with her arduous duty, had sunk into a heavy slumber, from which, however, she appeared ready every instant to start, while Seotitlan, having carefully fed the fire, followed her example. Up rose the unwearied flames, hotly blazed the charred logs, loudly crackled the damp boughs and leaves, making rude chorus in that spot, and shedding light on the suffering face of the babe.

About midnight the old man awoke, and at the same time the mother. Advancing to the child's side, the medicine-man of the whites declared the infant worse. The crisis was come

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OPENING EYES.

MEANWHILE Isaonie and Job fulfilled their task of watching over Amy Wilson. They did not move from their camp on the morning after the storm, as Richard Seaton was unable to proceed, being utterly overcome by the events of the preceding day, and suffering acutely from illness—not illness

which could well be defined or described, but a prostration of the mind's best faculties, which he had some difficulty in shaking off.

He lay all day on a rude couch of prairie-grass, Amy at his head, lavishing on him that rich tenderness which it is ever most sweet for woman to bestow, and which in the present instance was so unworthily wasted. Job looked on in pity and disgust, utterly unable to understand a passion which could blind Amy to the real character of her lover, while Isaonie gazed in stern silence on them, his heart swelling with emotions which he could scarce control.

Seaton was planning revenge on both, and his illness toward evening being more feigned than real, he would have endeavored to carry his plans into execution at once, but that he would not discover his real state by proposing a continuance of their journey. He was therefore compelled to temporize, hoping that the opportunity would soon offer for carrying out his evil purposes.

Toward evening Job intimated his intention of scouring the forest in search of the wild turkey, and at his request the chief remained in the camp. Seaton had retired to the hut erected for Amy, under the pretense of sleeping—in reality the more maturely to contrive his plans—while Amy, after strolling for an hour round about, was amusing herself by the preliminaries of the evening meal. Isaonie stood near at hand, his back against a tree, and intently gazing on Amy, though his eye would occasionally glance toward the little hut containing Seaton. For some minutes each party preserved his relative position, until suddenly the Indian's whole attention became absorbed by the fact that the white man had crept cautiously out, armed to the teeth.

Isaonie followed without a moment's hesitation, and in a few minutes Amy was left alone in the camp, with the dog Cæsar for her only guard. So habituated had she become, however, to this, that it excited no notice in her, especially as she believed that Seaton was slumbering close at hand. She gave herself wholly, therefore, to the influence of the hour.

It was again near sundown. The sky was streaked with roseate clouds, scattered fringe-like, here and there over its surface—clouds of that flimsy and weblike form which seldom

portend rain. But again in the north-west was a storm sternly brewing, and Amy grew sad as she thought the very elements had conspired against her, to thwart her journey and protract the time when she might find some peace in the consciousness of having a legal protector.

And now she dwelt on the memory of the past; on the quiet, happy evenings of her sunlit home; on the venerable and much-loved forms of her two parents, whom she could, as it were, in the unflinching and undimmed mirror of memory, see in living action before her. That tall, erect form, with white hair and brow, wrinkled by sudden sorrow, with stern, compressed lip, telling of mental struggles and sadness, which was bearing him to the grave, was her father; that mild and suppliant visage, praying him to moderate his grief, and not to say one harsh word against his only child, was her mother. A pair, hitherto all happiness and peace, now all sorrow.

In excuse for Amy's course, many causes had combined to influence her. She had been three months away from her parents, exposed to all the seductive arts of a handsome man, experienced in the female heart, and prepared, by any means, however infamous, to carry his purpose. She was, too, very young and ignorant of the world's ways, and yet did she know and feel, now that the first bewilderment was over, that she had done wrong.

"Why did I ever leave my parents, my father, my mother?" she exclaimed aloud.

"Yes, Miss Amy, 'specially wid sich a rascal as dat Seaton," said Job, who had reached her side unperceived, having, in fact, never left the skirt of the forest, where he had concealed himself in the hope of drawing off the man whom he thus characterized. How he succeeded has been seen.

"Job, exclaimed the young girl, starting, and gazing at the negro as if she thought him intoxicated, while indignation and shame spread in burning blushes over her face, "you forget yourself."

"Den it not be de fust time," said the negro, doggedly.

"What mean you, Job? What ails you?"

"I mean dat when I fust 'gree to foller you and Dick Seaton in de wood, den I forget ebery t'ing."

"You are weary of your journey, Job, doubtless, and I regret it much—"

"No; Job neber tired foller Miss Amy! But dat cussed t'ief and cutt'roat, Dick Seaton—" and without further preface the black poured forth his whole soul to Amy Wilson. He told how he had suspected the suitor all along of having deceived his mistress, and of never intending to wed her. With wondrous delicacy for one of his race, he explained the rogue's real intentions.

"Job! Job!" cried the indignant girl, "this is madness, this is folly! I thank you for your intentions, but you wrong Mr. Seaton."

"What for him try to absassinate Job for den?" replied the negro, bluntly.

"What?" said Amy, in a faltering voice,— "but hush! he will hear you."

"Not him; de t'ief skulk in de wood now for ole Job, but Job too much coon for him; him neber taste sich a old 'un afore."

"Good God!" cried the unhappy girl, "explain yourself."

And he did explain himself; and Amy Wilson, in one small quarter of an hour, discovered on the verge of what a precipice she had been standing, in perfect good faith, unconscious of her danger. On what a broken reed had she leaned, for what a guilty soul had she abandoned home, parents—almost, if not wholly, sacrificed her fair fame. But she was saved. Oh! she was quite sure of it. Forewarned, she was forearmed; and in heartfelt joy at her escape she could have embraced the worthy old man who had been so much more clear-sighted than she. And yet there lingered at her heart a deep regret that the only man she had ever loved should thus have grossly deceived her. She had no doubt; for he who could attempt to murder an inoffensive old man must be capable of any amount of guilt.

Amy's was a true woman's heart, but there was pride and deeply-rooted feelings of right and wrong, based on earnest and true religion, at bottom, which, combined with the fact that her love had owed its growth to his vehement passion and persuasion, rather than to any spontaneous feeling on her part, materially assisted her rapid revulsion.

Besides, as she reviewed with horror many little things in Seaton's manner and character, which before had never struck her, she reflected that others were not as he. One Frank Merton, for instance, a young and gallant cousin, a sailor, who at fourteen had called her his little wife—he, she was quite sure, would have never thus deceived her. And, by the way, said a little fluttering, feeble heart, where was Frank Merton all this while? She wondered whether he was even alive, and if he remembered her—tall, handsome, dark-eyed lad that he was. But of course he must be married, with a large family, and there was no hope for her.

And Amy Wilson blushed to the very eyes, as she allowed such a thought to enter her mind. She who had eloped with one man, thinking with interest of another. Blush not, Amy Wilson; many women have done the same before; many a woman has wasted her sweetness on one whom she really loved not, while, almost unconsciously to herself, another has held paramount and entire sway. Thus it was with Amy. The wild and sudden passion, born of flattery, nursed by well-feigned ardor and devotion, fed by fear of the lover's violence to himself, and which had never had time for reason and reflection to temper it, fell before the long unfelt affection which had grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength—which had been the fondness of a girl for her boyish companion, the interest of a young and budding woman for a gallant young sailor, unseen, *unknown*, uncared for, holy as a brother's love, but now for the first time *revealed* to her heart.

How she wept and sobbed, and upbraided herself, poor Amy Wilson! and what vain regrets came rushing to her little beating heart—for, of course, who would look at her now? And then, to meet Richard Seaton, to bear his presence, to conceal her aversion, was dreadful.

"Oh, Job!" she cried, "what a wretched girl I am! What am I to do?"

"Dat berry plain," replied the negro; "I tell him fus' w'at I t'ink, an' dat Miss Amy knows all; an' den I and Injin watch ober you."

"But I dread Seaton. I see now what a bold, bad man he is. If he would have murdered you, why should he spare me?"

"Him bad man, dat plain observation; but him no kill Miss Amy, while dar's life in de ole bones of Job Samson."

While they were conversing the evening closed around them, and Amy, dreading for one moment to be left alone, cast herself on the floor of her rude hut, bidding Job to sleep in the outer one across the entrance; and very soon, amid a heavy shower of rain, and the sighing of leaves and wind, sobbed herself to sleep, while the negro, over the embers of a fire, awaited the return of his companions.

But neither Richard Seaton nor the Indian were seen any more that night.

CHAPTER IX.

A MOTHER'S GRIEF.

"Send down thy winged angel, God,
-Amidst this night so wild,
And bid him come where now we watch,
And breathe upon our child."

WHEN Eleah saw that the life of her child hung, as it were, upon a thread, her whole mien changed. There was no longer any of a woman's tenderness about her—no longer the mild, imploring eye of a hopeful mother, who knows that there is danger, but that skill and mercy may avert it. She held the babe in her lap, and assisted in administering the medicine which the white man offered, and then sunk into a dreary apathy, which alarmed her companions, the more that the infant's dissolution appeared near at hand, when it was possible her pent-up misery would take another and more painful turn.

The white men, evidently forgetting in their sympathy the purpose for which they were wandering in the woods, sat for several hours watching the progress of disease, until at length, wearied and heavy, they fell into a sound and refreshing slumber, such as their fatigues of the preceding day naturally required. So needful to their frames was this repose, that when they awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, the beams

of which had already absorbed much of the moisture which bedewed surrounding nature. Gazing around eagerly to discover in what state were their entertainers, Seot was alone visible, nursing the still breathing child upon his knee—tenderly, watchfully as a woman.

Eleah was nowhere to be seen.

“This is strange!” observed the elder traveler, musing. “I never knew a mother abandon her child at such a moment. I must see the end of this.”

“And our purpose?” said the young man anxiously and somewhat timidly.

“Will not suffer because we turn aside awhile to soothe the sufferings of our fellow-creatures,” replied the other, with, however, a deep sigh, which told how much he wished that no such duty had occurred to prevent the prosecution of his journey.

“I know not, uncle; every moment lost is a pang which I can ill bear,” continued the young man.

“And I—have I no pangs—I that am fatherless—I that have vowed to bring back to a mother’s arms an erring child, or return no more? Nephew, God has guided my footsteps to this place, and if I can save this babe, ’twill be a mercy for which I, rather than its parents, will have to thank heaven.”

“Uncle, you are right,” observed the young man in a subdued tone, “and we will do our best.” But what can have happened to the mother? Let us inquire.”

They accordingly approached the Mexican, whom, by dint of great persuasion, they induced to lay the suffering but sleeping child on a soft couch of leaves—Seot having an idea that, as Eleah had left it in his arms, he should keep it there until her return—and then proceeded to demand an explanation. The wizard, who was gloomy and sad, replied readily, that long before dawn the young mother had, in a half-frenzied out imperative manner, given up the child to him and left the cavern, he knew not whither.

“I fear she is crazed with her grief,” said the nephew, abstractedly, his thoughts being elsewhere.

“Not so,” continued the uncle, shaking his head; “or if so, there is strange method in her madness. She has departed on

a holy errand, or I much mistake my knowledge of woman's character."

Strange compound truly is woman—never more truthfully described than by one who generally was neither poetical nor a correct picturer of the sex:

— "In our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A minstering angel thou."

"On what errand?" inquired the nephew, curiously.

"To bring back her husband to her side."

"After deserting her thus?" replied the young man rather warmly.

"Yes," said the old man, somewhat sternly; "why should woman alone set herself against God's decree? Does not a parent welcome back with joy an erring child, ay, and love him the more in that he has triumphed over error? Does not the great Giver of good rejoice and receive with open arms the repentant sinner, more gladly even than him who has known no sin? Then why should woman set herself above God, and know no pardon for a fault?"

"And why should not man, then, receive back a sorrowful but sinful wife?"

"Every true man would do so. He might not, in deference to society, own the pardon; he would never call her wife again; but as he forgave her not when she sought forgiveness, pardon would be denied him at a time when he would need it more than she. But, let us not discuss this question now," added the old man, somewhat gloomily; "let me rather while you prepare some necessary refreshment, examine into the state of this little child."

CHAPTER X

RETRIBUTION.

It was drawing toward evening, and nature, as if weary of the storm which had hitherto prevailed, was subsiding to rest. The sun was setting in a sea of calm but glowing crimson, while the wind, though damp and fitful, blew as if its ample powers were almost spent. The light, which had not departed as yet, illumined one of those open glades of the forest which are so welcome to the weary traveler. From such spots the relieved eye gazes upward at the heavens, and the eternal monotony of the green trees is relieved.

In one of these openings, leaning against an upright sycamore, and screening himself from too curious observation by means of its dark shadow, his hand clutching his rifle, his lips compressed, stood Richard Seaton. He was listening with intense anxiety, but as yet in vain, for some sound which he expected to hear.

"I tracked him to this spot," he muttered, with evident impatience; "the meddling fool—but lost the mark of his footsteps on the edge of yonder thicket. He will doubtless return this way, and then Heaven rest his soul—and mine," he added, falteringly, with that doubting fear which comes at times to the soul of the most hardened criminal.

The shadows grew deeper and deeper, until the long, black stream of night reached from side to side of the little prairie casting all into thick gloom.

Just then a rapid footstep came rushing through the thicket opposite where Seaton stood, and the young man, clutching his gun with violence, as if fearful of his own courage giving way, and anxious to goad himself on, placed it at full cock.

"'Tis he," he muttered; "and now one of my foes falls, to rise up against me no more."

He fired just as the form of a human being became dimly visible, and the surrounding trees reëchoed with the report of his gun.

Then all was still, for the stricken one had fallen heavily on the ground.

"'Tis done—the bloody deed!" he said, grinding his teeth, and drawing a deep breath from the very pit of his chest; "but life clings hard to the worthless carcass of a negro—I will see that he be really dead."

"Ugh!" was hissed rather than spoken in his ear, as a thong, which had, unconsciously to him, been encircled round his form as he fired, drew him tight, writhing and impotent, against the tree. Isaonie, armed, bound him firmly ere he could offer a struggle, and then stood menacingly, like the angel of death, before his way.

"Fiend, loose me!" cried the furious and half-baffled white, who now saw himself in the power of his other foe, the man against whose life he was next to have made an attempt.

"Cord good!" replied the Comanche, in his deep, solemn and guttural manner; "they will keep a bad man from wicked deeds."

"Indian," said Seaton, who at a glance had discovered that he was wholly in the power of the young chief, and thought fit to temporize, "listen. We will make a bargain. That fool of a black may have promised you much, but he could never perform any thing. I will give you wealth, arms, paint, every thing which shall make your wigwam rich, if you will but be my friend."

"Will you give me the white girl?" replied the Indian, glaring upon the other with scorn, as he heard offers to him so contemptible and worthless.

"What for?" asked Seaton, much surprised.

"The pale-face girl will not love the white man any more when she knows that her brave has tried to kill her best friend," continued the Indian, remaining outwardly calm and motionless.

"Tried!" said Seaton, with a sneer; "this time I have not failed. The black rascal is out of the way."

The astonishment and surprise of the Indian at this statement was unlimited, for, though he had seen and heard the gun explode, he had, in his anxiety to capture the white man alive, believed the shot to have been fired accidentally, or, at all events, upon mere chance.

"Where, then, is my black brother?" he inquired, in a stern and earnest whisper, "that I may see if his spirit be gone?"

"He lies yonder," said Seaton, pointing eagerly to the skirt of the wood, and hoping, during the Indian's absence, to loosen the ligatures which had been so unceremoniously tied to his body.

"Ugh!" breathed the Comanche, and turning, he hurried to the spot indicated by the assassin's hand.

Despite the gathering gloom, which had now almost wholly enshrouded the scene, the keen eye of the warrior rapidly distinguished a body lying on the grass, in that bent-up manner in which a wounded man is apt to fall. Hastening nearer, the Indian's breath grew short as he saw that the form he beheld, apparently dead upon the cold ground, was no negro. With a furious yell, a yell that chilled the very life-blood in Seaton's veins, Isaonie bounded forward like a stricken deer, and as the pale luster of the moon flooded the thick night-air with pellucid light, turned upward the face of Seaton's victim: in that one second, the Indian had lived an hour of agony—agony most fearful.

It was Eleah.

Isaonie knelt as one changed bodily to stone. His breath refused its office; his eyeballs glared tiger-like upon her, as that pale, mild, serene, but collapsed visage, thin and ghastly with grief and watching, met his gaze. She was nearly denuded; her garments were torn to rags by the thorns and briars she had madly dashed through on her way; her tender feet were bare of moccasins, while in her clenched hands, so held that no human force could have wrenched it from her, was a little toy, which the warrior had bestowed upon his babe.

As the Comanche gazed, a deep-drawn sigh burst from the young mother's lips, and never was word of promise from gentle lips to the pleading lover so sweet, so musical, so joyful, as that sign which Eleah had given of life to the heart-stricken warrior, her erring, truant, heart-reproached husband.

"Eleah is not dead!" he groaned, as he bent over her form in vain search for the wound which had laid her low.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, as his search was so gladly unrewarded, that no hurts, save those inflicted by fatigue, were visible.

"Come," he then said, raising her tenderly and fearfully in his arms, and turning toward Seaton, "the white man shall see what he has done."

Approaching Richard, whose utmost struggles had not sufficed to obtain his own release, the Indian laid at the feet of the attempted assassin the still insensible body of his wife. Even the hardened ruffian, whose hand had twice sought the life of his fellow-creature, shuddered, as he saw what appeared to be a corpse placed near him, and a corpse which had been made by his instrumentality.

"The white man is very cunning—he lies down in dark places to kill his companion, but the Manitou is great, and wills not that he should," said the Indian, in a solemn and hollow voice, his burden lying at his feet, while, with arms folded, he stood before the assassin.

"Is she dead?" faltered Seaton.

"Dead!" thundered the husband; "Eleah is *not* dead. The wife of Isaonie lives, but the white man who tried to kill her—must die."

"Good Indian," exclaimed Seaton, in an agony of alarm "you do not surely mean to kill me?"

"If Isaonie lets the red-handed white man live, where will be the life of the woolly-head, where the life of Eleah, where the life of Isaonie?" said the Indian.

"But I will swear—"

"By what?" returned the other, raising the head of his slowly-recovering but still-insensible wife; "by the life of the pale-face girl's friend?"

"By any thing you will!" shrieked the young man, with fearful energy, for in the Indian's calm mien he read his stern determination.

"But Isaonie will not believe. Isaonie is a warrior; he will kill the enemy of his people, when the hatchet has been dug up, and he is gone on the war-path; but let him—behind—like a snake, kill one with whom he had eaten, and whose hand he had taken every day, and his people would—"

"Send you forth as an exile."

"To return and kill the rest," replied the Indian, cynically. "No! the pale-face has dyed his hands red, and Isaonie will wipe out the stain."

The warrior here rose, and, loosening his tomahawk, prepared to put his fearful, but, it must be said, just, sentence into execution. Seaton, who saw in his fixed eye, in his frowning mien, erect form, and generally threatening bearing, that hope there was none, bowed his head; and with the most cringing horror—with that abject fear which is characteristic of the criminal when not exposed to the admiring gaze of tens of thousands of his fellow-men, prepared for the awful blow which should send him to the presence of a Judge whose will is irrevocable, whose mercy is infinite.

"Indian," said the culprit, after a moment's pause; "give me a moment for prayer."

"What says the red-handed pale-face?" replied the avenger.

"Give me a moment to speak with the Manitou of the white man," continued the terrified ruffian.

Isaonie reverentially drew back, and again stooping over his wife, could now distinctly note her breathing.

"Eleah, Eleah!" said the warrior, softly, as if he feared the effect of his voice upon her.

"Who calls Eleah?" whispered she faintly; "is it my little one? Am I, too, with him in the land of dreams?"

A fearful suspicion, strengthened by his wife's presence alone in the woods, as if in search of something she had lost, her eyes swollen with weeping and watching struck the warrior's heart.

"My little one is well?" he whispered.

"Is it so? and is Eleah away from his side? Did he go intended, and alone, when his mother would carry him to the happy fields of the Indian?"

"Eleah!" cried Isaonie, tenderly, but with a husky determination in his tone, "where is my boy?"

"Isaonie!" said the girl, rising and placing her hand upon her beating forehead, "is it my warrior calls?"

"It is your husband," replied he.

"And he found me in the woods?"

"Yes—but Neosho?"

"He is with the medicine-man of the whites," she added;

and then her mind recovering, she threw herself upon the warrior's neck, and weeping, and sobbing, told him the tale.

"And I saw that the Manitou would take him," she ended, "and Eleah knew that it was not good that the son of a brave should die, and his father not see him, for he would come after and say, 'Mother, where is my boy?' and the mother would have no boy to show. And Eleah dried her tears, for she remembered that her brave was in the woods; and she said, 'The Manitou will not take my child while I am looking for its father.' I have found him; come, father of Neosho, and see your little one before he dies."

This was said in the low, plaintive tones of a mother's woe, checked here and there by sobs, but not a word of the husband's departure—and Isaonie heard and wept.

"Mother of Neosho," he said sternly, staying the full current of his anguish, "I will come; where is my child?"

"In the cave of the Hunter's Rest; there Seot and the white medicine-man watch over him."

"It is far," said Isaonie, sadly; "but let us go."

"Come," continued Eleah, her face beaming with holy joy.

"Go aside into the woods a moment," whispered the warrior, "for a deed of blood is to be done; and Eleah must not see it."

"On him?" inquired the girl, shuddering as she gazed on the crouching form of the assassin; "what has the white man done?"

Isaonie briefly explained.

"Girl, woman!" said Seaton, in anguish, "speak for me; stay the bloody purpose of your husband."

Eleah turned away; it was not the province of an Indian wife to interfere in the warlike deeds of her mate.

Seaton bowed his ghastly face upon his breast, for now he knew that he must die.

"A white man is nursing the child of Isaonie," she gently murmured in his ear, however, after a pause.

"Ugh!" said the Indian, "it is good. Stay here, and Isaonie will return in a moment."

With these words, he vanished beneath the gloomy eaves of the forest, and there was a dead silence.

"Indian wife!" exclaimed the prisoner, in hurried accents,

as soon as he was quite sure that he could not be heard by the retreating warrior; "listen to the white man. Have mercy on me; I am not ready to die. Unloose me, and I will fly, to be seen, to be heard of, no more."

"Why did the white man wish to slay his brother?" inquired Eleah, who was thinking of her sick child, and not of the trembling, anxious wretch before her.

"Ask me not why," he cried, "when your husband will be back in a moment, and all hope gone."

"Eleah can not loose the man her warrior has tied up. The face of Isaonie would be dark, and turned from her."

"My God! my God!" shrieked Seaton, "is there no mercy on earth?"

As he spoke, he tugged violently at his thongs, vainly striving to free himself.

Suddenly he saw something which awakened hope.

Eleah had risen to her feet—her head was bent sideways in a listening attitude! A light step was approaching!

The beautiful Mexican crept forward. She reached a tree, behind which she screened herself, then cautiously peered toward the thick clumps of shrubbery ahead. Seaton, glancing in the same direction, saw what looked like a black wing, protruding just above the bushes.

"Nothing but a bird!" he muttered; "so, no hope, after all!"

Just then, Eleah, her eyes beaming startled glances, turned, and still keeping herself screened, seemed to muster all her remaining strength.

One more glance toward the bushes, then away she went, speeding silently and swiftly in the direction her husband had taken.

Soon what had seemed the wing of a bird, became more conspicuous. Advancing, an Indian's head was revealed beneath; then the face, hideous in war-paint, with its massive cheek-bones, and its eyes glowing fire, came to view!

An instant later, the Apache chief, Black Feather, stood forth, his six-foot frame towering, his massive shoulders brushing the leaves.

His quick glance fell upon Seaton—his hand sought his tomahawk, but he showed no surprise. Perceiving that the

white man was bound, he uttered a short, disdainful grunt, and quickly let go of his weapon.

He advanced in front of the captive.

"Ugh! how this? Indian been here! No see now! Eagle sometimes leave sparrow after catch him! Kill first, though!"

The savage spoke in the execrable English learned at the forts, but Seaton understood him perfectly.

"My friend," answered Seaton, "I perceive that you are an Apache brave! A Comanche made me fast here! He was here, a moment since with his wife; but both the eagle and his mate are now gone! Release me, and I will tell you all, for I am a friend to the Apaches!"

The chief, with a couple of blows of the tomahawk, severed the thongs.

"Now, quick tell!" he said; "tell how let *one* Indian, a *Comanche*," shrugging his shoulders with contempt, "make fast to tree!"

Seaton soon told his story, thus:

Traveling in the woods, up the Rio Grande, toward Santa Fé, with a white girl friend, whom he had quitted for a few moments, he had been seized unawares from behind, and bound to the tree, by a Comanche Indian, having with him his squaw, who was not of his tribe, but seemed to be a Mexican.

The eyes of the chief flashed.

"How Mexican look? Eyes like star-fire, hair like burnt corn-tassels?"

"Yes; and she *was* beautiful! The Comanche called her Eleah!"

The chief's brow darkened.

"Eleah, wife of a Comanche! Which way go? *Why* go before scalp?"

"The Comanches are not enemies to the pale-faces! The Comanche had seen my pale-face friend. He was tired of his own squaw, and wanted the white face for his wigwam!"

The chief paused a moment.

"You say friend to Apache! It is well. Come. You have helped to find the Mexican flower. The Black Feather help pale-face to find his *white* bird!"

CHAPTER XI.

MISSING !

HURRYING along, Eleah, in the course of a few minutes, met Isaonie, with the black, leading the horses belonging to the party, which he and Amy had readily given up for the use of the husband and wife.

"Isaonie!" cried Eleah, "I bring news! Your foes are abroad! The Black Feather, of the Apaches, is near!"

She related what she had seen.

The Comanche showed little emotion. His eyes flashed, however, and his lips curled.

"Let no dog of an Apache cross the path of the Silent Stream. His heart is strong—his tomahawk ready!"

Eleah's eyes flashed proudly.

"The mountain pine may withstand one thunderbolt! More may rend it! Beware, brave husband!"

"It is well. Let us seek Neosho, then back to the camp. Isaonie must be with his brothers in the red fight!"

They mounted their horses, and away they went with the speed of the wind, taking a roundabout course, which, from what Eleah had said, the Silent Stream doubted not would enable them to elude his foes.

After a rapid, but not prolonged ride, they reached the Hunter's Rest.

"Neosho!" exclaimed Eleah, as she bounded from her steed.

Isaonie entered the cave with her.

IT WAS EMPTY!

The Mexican fell upon her knees: her head drooped; sobs rent her bosom.

Stern and silent stood Isaonie. His frame trembled. His conscience reproached him.

"Gone!" moaned the bereaved mother. "Where, oh, where? Dead or living? Oh, Isaonie! this comes of the WHITE LADY!"

She started up, glaring upon him.

"Eleah must hope!" he said. "The heart of Isaonie is very sad, but his eye pierces the mist! See!"

He pointed to the print of a moccasin upon the damp ground.

"Nay," answered Eleah, "Seotitlan sometimes wore moccasins. It is his footmark! Oh, whither have they all gone? and Neosho—my own Neosho, is he dead or alive?"

Isaonie stood up straight as a dart; his brow was knitted, his eyes seemed fixed on vacancy. Eleah looked at him. What did he see?—the WHITE SPIRIT? The heart of the distracted wife beat furiously.

What! her husband still infatuated by the vision which had been the cause of her losing her child!

Now the Indian's hand rested on his tomahawk; his eyes glittered—he drew himself back.

Suddenly, quick as a flash, up went his weapon; then straight as an arrow it flew humming through the air!

There was a dull, crashing sound. An Apache sprung up from a clump of bushes near the cave, and fell to the earth.

Isaonie was upon him in a moment.

"Dog! where is Neosho—the child of the Silent Stream?"

The fading eyes were turned up steadily, fearlessly.

"Blackfoot is no dog! The dog howls when dying! Blackfoot dies without howling! A hundred cowardly Comanches could not make *one* Apache howl!"

"Where is Neosho?"

"Ask Minnola, the gray squaw! her hands are red with the blood of the Comanche whelp! Where is *her* pappoose? Its scalp is with a cowardly Comanche! I have said!"

The Apache breathed his last. *His* scalp soon was at the belt of Isaonie. Eleah had heard the dying man's words. Her head drooped.

"Neosho! Neosho!"

The cry pierced the heart of the Indian.

"Hark! The spirit of the Apache must not hear the wife of a Comanche wail! It shall hear Isaonie! This is what he says: *A hundred Apaches shall die for Neosho.* Come!"

The stricken wife followed her husband. Mounted on their

fleet-footed steeds, they soon reached the spot where they had left Amy and Job. Both were gone; there were signs which showed that they had been taken prisoners by the Apaches.

Making a wide circuit so as to avoid their enemies, Eleah and Isaonie soon arrived at Camp Comanche.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAIL

SHORTLY after Eleah had left her child in the care of the white doctor, the latter was pleased to perceive that the crisis of fever was passed. The little one fell off into a natural slumber—a sure sign of improvement.

“It were well,” said the old man, “that some one should go at once and convey the glad tidings to the distracted mother.”

“I will go!” exclaimed Seet; “I know the forest paths. The mother soon shall be made happy!”

So saying, away he went.

Fifteen minutes later, the old man and his nephew heard a cry of distress.

The nephew sprung up, grasping his gun.

“Where are you going, Frank?”

“That cry came from Seot, or I am mistaken,” was the reply; “I fear he is in peril; I must go to his assistance.”

“Be careful, my dear boy. Come back as soon as you can.”

Caution, however, formed no part of the young man's nature. Being a sailor, he was not much at home in the woods. Crashing through the shrubbery, and over fallow wood, away he went, like a ship before the wind.

“Ay, ay, now,” he thought, “this is troublesome navigation. A man in distress might be killed and put under hatches before I could reach him.”

The old man in the cave vainly waited for his return. The

child was sleeping undisturbedly upon its couch of dried leaves.

"I will leave the little patient," he muttered, "and go for a few minutes, just to see what has become of poor Frank."

With gun in hand he quitted the cave, moving along with the caution of old age, and the experience of an expert backwoodsman.

The trail of the missing one, who had used no care to conceal it, was easily followed by displaced branches and trodden-down grass and flowers.

The old man soon came to a thick group of trees, from among which rose the exhalations of a swamp.

"Frank! Frank!" he called.

Soon he he heard a floundering and spluttering.

"Ahoy, there!" came the clear voice of his nephew; "be careful, uncle, or blow me if you won't get into the same infernal mess as I have."

"Where are you? Have you seen any thing of Seot?"

"I am up to my neck in mud, uncle. A pest upon these swamps! Give me deep water. I have seen nothing of Seot."

The old man crept cautiously forward, and soon, having reached the center of the swamp by crossing a number of stumps, he perceived his nephew, up to his neck in mud, as he had stated. The young man had only saved himself from going under by clinging to the drooping branch of a tree, to which he still held, unable to extricate himself.

"Ay, ay, now, isn't this a pretty state for a civilized being?" exclaimed Frank.

With much trouble, the old man succeeded eventually in drawing him out.

Soon they reached dry land, which they had scarcely gained, when with a yell half a dozen fierce-looking Apaches surrounded them.

"Ugh! What doing here?" questioned one.

"See here, red-skins!" exclaimed Frank, "don't hinder us. We're in search of a little craft, astray with a bad tender!"

"No understand. Speak plain. What mean?"

Here the old man explained. He knew that at present the

Apaches were at peace with the whites, and therefore anticipated no trouble.

"You will permit us to go upon our way?" he said.

"Don't know. Must speak to Black Feather. Come!"

The prisoners were conducted to a deep glen, in which was seated the Black Feather with half a dozen of his warriors.

A brief consultation was held. The two men were retained until near sundown, when they were permitted to depart.

From a rudely-constructed bower or lodge, in which he sat, eating venison meat with several natives, Seaton had, unobserved, watched the two men from the first.

He breathed a sigh of relief when they were gone.

"Good!" he muttered. "*They* never shall fasten their clutches upon that girl; she will be mine, yet!"

Just then the party which had captured Amy and Job came in. They had for a long time halted some distance from the glen, to watch a party of Comanche scouts whom they had seen in the woods.

"It is she!" exclaimed Seaton, springing from the bower and seeking the Black Feather. "This is my white bird!" pointing at Amy.

"And who this?" inquired Black Feather, indicating Job. "Black cloud and summer cloud together! What mean?"

"It means," replied Seaton, "that that rascal would rob me of my white bird. He is an enemy to your tribe; he has followed you as a spy; he is a friend to Silent Stream, the Comanche."

Had Amy previously entertained doubts of the villainy of Seaton, they must now have been dissipated.

"Indian!" she exclaimed, "it is false! I am nothing now to this man. The black is my friend, and would take me home to my people, whom I was persuaded to leave by this bad-hearted person, whom I love no longer."

A light seemed to flash on the Indian's brain.

"Was father old man? Was there young pale-face who love?"

Amy's cheek was crimsoned. How had the chief obtained this information?

"You speak truly," she answered.

The chief's piercing eyes were bent upon Seaton.

"Look him right t'rough, Indian!" exclaimed Job, "and you see de heart blacker dan dat fedder a-wavin' on your head! He am a rascal! He try to kill dis ole man, who nebber do him a bress bit of harm!"

"Don't know! The mind of Black Feather clouded. Two pale-faces just gone, mus' be fadder and brodder of the white bird!"

"You are mistaken," whispered Seaton, readily; "I have seen her father and the other person. The two who just went away, were not they!"

Still the Indian's eyes were fixed doubtingly on the speaker's face.

"Listen, Indian," said Seaton, in the same low tones as before, "you know a squaw has no right to leave the man she has consented to follow?"

"Ugh! good!"

"Well, then, shall the white bird be permitted to leave me?"

"No! not if what the pale-face has said is true. The pale-face has a deep heart. I can not see it. There is a mist over it!"

"I will soon remove the mist," said Seaton, his eyes suddenly glistening. "See here! and doubt me longer if you can!"

So saying, he pulled a red and white feather from the pocket of the negro, who, with the love for gay colors natural to his race, had picked from the ground these feathers, which had dropped from the head of Isaonie.

"Behold!" exclaimed Seaton, holding high the trophies. "See proof of what I said. These are from Isaonie. The black is the friend of your enemy—the Silent Stream."

Instantly the chief's hand was upon the negro's throat—his tomahawk uplifted.

"The dark cloud has lied; he would steal the white bird. He is a foe to the Apaches."

Amy, shrieking, would have interposed; but strong arms held her.

The tomahawk was about to descend, when a clear voice was heard:

"Hold!"

From a clump of bushes appeared the speaker—a tall old man, a Mexican of dignified appearance.

It was Armillo, the father of Eleah!

He demanded explanations, which were soon given.

The Mexican eyed Seaton keenly, and was evidently not pleased with the survey.

"Let the three be kept as prisoners, but offer them no harm," he said. "Time will reveal the truth."

"It is well," answered Black Feather. "My Mexican brother is wise."

Meanwhile the two liberated whites had continued on to the Hunter's Rest.

Entering the cave about an hour before Eleah and her husband reached it, they also perceived that it was empty.

The same print of the moccasin, afterward seen by Isaonie, caught the old man's eye.

"Some person has been here and carried off the little one," said he. "It is our duty, nephew, to follow the trail. I think we did wrong in leaving the cave."

"Ay, ay, every thing seems to go wrong in this uncivilized region," answered Frank. "Give me a broad stretch of blue water, where, if any thing is wrong, you can see it."

The two then quitted the cave. They followed the trail, which, however, soon was lost.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE MARCH.

THE hour was daybreak.

The melancholy cries of the loon were hushed upon the forest waters. The birds of light were awake. The robin was in the mulberry tree, picking at the fruit. The duck was heard in the marshy pond; the eagle and the hawk, shrieking, perched themselves in the branches of the pinnated calabash-tree; the American pigeon flew high in air; the black

and golden orioles made weird music ; the spotted woodpecker tapped merrily at the bark of the cherry-wood.

Suddenly there was another sound, the crashing of Mexican rifles !

Then followed yells, seeming to rise from the very bowels of the earth.

Apaches and Mexicans had attacked the Comanche camp.

The combat was long and desperate. The Comanches fought bravely : the red and white feathers of Isaonie were seen wherever the battle raged fiercest. Tomahawks glittered through the air ; blows fell thick as the rains of heaven ; Armillo's Mexicans did good work with their rifles.

The black plume of the Apache chief floated like a cloud through the smoke ; his arm sent many a Comanche sprawling to earth.

For hours the fight raged ; for hours the yells and groans of the combatants made the forest trees tremble.

Armillo fell, cheering on his men, his breast cloven open by a tomahawk. His followers avenged his death. They fought like madmen, and being in the majority, the victory won was theirs.

Isaonie, scorning to flee or yield, stood with his back to a tree, still fighting against several Apaches, who were endeavoring to make him prisoner.

A Mexican lifted his rifle : his hand was on the trigger, to shoot the Silent Stream, when a form interposed.

It was Eleah.

Still the bullet must have sped and clove her heart in twain, but for the Black Feather, who knocked the rifle upward, thus sending the leaden missile skyward.

The next moment Isaonie was captured, while the Black Feather triumphantly led the stricken Eleah away.

The usual horrors of savage warfare were perpetrated upon the dead Comanches lying on the battle-field, and preparations were soon made for the torture of the prisoners.

Tied to trees, most of them died a horrible death by fire, hot flints and barbed arrows. Others were kept for slaves.

At noon the whole party started for the Mexican country.

Halting at sundown, the Black Feather presented himself to Eleah.

"The chief has conquered," he said; "he wants light in his wigwam. The Mexican Flower shall light it with the dew of her eyes."

"No," answered Eleah, showing disgust. "The heart of the Mexican girl is with her Isaonie. The Black Feather can not tear it away from *him*. He will carry it with him to the spirit-land."

"The Comanche chief tortured the Black Feather's brother in the Comanche country. The Black Feather shall burn the heart of the Silent Stream to ashes in *his* country. There the Mexican Flower shall be the Black Feather's squaw."

"Eleah would sooner die!"

The chief turned moodily away. The Mexic girl should be his. He would ply her with soft words, with flattery and rich gifts.

At daybreak the party continued on. They traveled for many days, crossing the Rio Grande—crossing the lofty Cordilleras, and finally reached Mexico in the country of the Apaches.

One day at noon they halted about ten miles from Orizava, the *Cittal-Tepetil* or Starry Mountain of the Indians.

The chiefs were assembled in council until night, when the lurid camp-fires were seen glowing far and near.

There was no moon, but away toward the mountain a singular whitish light was seen: the luminous exhalations from the crater of the Starry Mountain. The light seemed to grow larger and broader every moment, assuming tints like those of the rainbow, which revealed the snow-covered summit of the elevation, looming up like a huge ghost wearing a great white cape.

Now there was a bustle in the camp. A number of warriors appeared, leading Isaonie, whom they had doomed to death at the stake. Soon, all was ready. The victim was tied to a post thrust into the earth, fagots were heaped around him; warriors and squaws came to witness and to gloat over his agonies.

Upon the face of the Silent Stream there was not the slightest trace of fear—of emotion of any kind.

When tied to the stake, his mien was calm and proud, perhaps a little scornful.

The Black Feather came and confronted him ; the two warriors eyed each other steadily.

"Dog !" cried the Apache, "ugh !"—shrugging his shoulders.

"The Black Feather lies !"

"The Silent Stream shall be burnt to ashes ! First he shall be made to howl ! The hot iron shall burn his flesh ! He shall cry out like a squaw !"

"*Apaches* are all squaws !" answered Isaonie. "Comanches are *men*. Their spirits are firm. In the midst of fire they laugh at the Apaches who kindle it. They die singing—singing they go to the happy land. There the Apaches shall never go. *They* are all cowards. The thunderbolts of our fathers shall drive them back."

At this there were angry screeches, and yells of derision from the women.

"Let the squaws be silent !" exclaimed the Black Feather.

Then he made a sign to his warriors. Their torches were alight, the fagots were about to be kindled, when a voice of rich music thrilled through the air :

"Spare him ! Oh, spare him !"

Through the dusky throng came the speaker, advancing straight to the pile of fagots.

Isaonie bowed his head ; his eyes glowed, his whole being thrilled.

The LADY OF THE WHITE CANOE had again burst upon his vision !

There she stood, in all her entrancing beauty—her bright hair sweeping her shoulders, her large, luminous eyes full of heavenly pity and kindness.

"Yes, you *must* spare this man !" exclaimed Amy Wilson.

"Away with the pale-face girl !" cried the Black Feather. "Light the wood ! The Comanche *must* die !"

Again the torches were flourished. Amy was led away from the spot.

She cast a glance behind her, and uttered a cry of joy : there was another interruption. This in the person of Seot, who suddenly came bursting upon the scene.

His long hair waved wildly round his shoulders ; sticks,

Whistles, and twisted blades of grass were curiously stuck upon his head.

Poor Seot! he was more of an idiot than ever!

On that day when he left the cave, he had met with an accident, which had deranged even what little reason was left in his whirling brain.

Dashing impetuously along in search of Eleah, he had stumbled and fallen into a ravine, striking his head against a rock, with a violence which almost deprived him of consciousness.

He rose for the present a madman, and rushed along, not knowing whither he went—over plain and hill, through forest and valley.

Mere instinct prompted him, as he journeyed on, to partake of the banana, the mulberry, the cherry, and the roots which, in emergency, can be made to sustain life. On he went—crossed the Rio Grande, the Cordilleras, and eventually reached his native land.

Still wandering, he chanced to halt, on the night fixed for Isaonie's death, about three miles from the Apache camp.

It was the sight of the blazing camp-fires that had drawn him thither.

The whirling flames, to his disordered brain, resembled so many fire-demons, beckoning to him with red-hot arms.

Now bursting suddenly before the amazed Apaches, he stood surveying them with wild eyes. Then his glances wandered to Isaonie.

He clapped a hand to his brow. The recollection of the Indian's face rose dimly above the whirlpool of his disordered brain.

Crashing through the fagots, he seized the arm of the prisoner.

"Seot!" exclaimed Isaonie, "leave me. The fate of the Silent Stream is fixed. I hear the voices of my fathers, calling me to the happy land."

"Ho! ho! ho!" screamed Seot, springing up and capering madly. "Happy land! Where is it? I see fire all around me—above, below! Come—come away from the fire-demons!"

The Apaches exchanged glances of wonder and respect. They saw the infirmity of Seot in a moment.

The Black Feather laid a hand on the madman's arm.

"Go!" he said, "leave us. A dog of a Comanche is to die!"

"Hush!" screamed Seot. "Dare you speak thus to the great prophet? I am a prophet. Behold! if your fire-fiends burn this man, the whole Apache race shall be swept from the land—squaws and all—by a whirlwind of blast and flame driven upon you by the Great Spirit."

"My brother's words are strange! The Apache has a right to destroy his brother's murderer. The Great Spirit shall say it is good."

"No! Death! *death!* DEATH! to your whole race, I say, if you burn the friend of the great prophet. He is your enemy, but *my* friend. Still, Seot is also a friend to the Apaches. He shall prophesy good or evil to them. He is in league with the Manitou."

For several moments a solemn silence fell upon the dusky warriors. Then they conversed in low tones among themselves.

"The Comanche shall be freed from the stake," said the Black Feather; "but we must keep him prisoner. He shall die whenever the prophet says it is good."

"Ho! ho! ho! that's right!" screamed Seot. "I will tell you when to burn him. Yes! yes! and when you *do* burn him, I will dance with you round the blazing pile."

The cords holding the prisoner were severed. He was conducted to a lodge, and a guard placed over him.

Seot was now following the chief toward his tent, when he felt a hand upon his arm, and turning, beheld Job, the black.

"Oh, Massa prophet! you can do two persecuted beir's a right ob good!" said the old black. "De Indians hab a white gal in dis camp, ob whom I hab constitutioned myself de protector. Dey keeps watch on us all de time, so dat we habn't any sight ob gettin' away. Now if you will speak about some more ob dem whirlwinds ob rain and fire about *us*, tellin' de Indians to let us go, dis chile will bress you all de days ob his life."

Seot, in his mad condition, ready to catch at any remark

took up this one, and twisting it round, in his own wild fashion, told the Black Feather that it would be best for him to permit the negro and the white girl to go their way.

At first the chief objected, on the ground of his bargain with Seaton. Since he had made it, however, Armillo, the Mexican, had given his opinion to the chief that the white man had no right whatever to Amy, and had even proposed to free the white girl and her friend after the battle. His death had put an end to this project; still, the Indian, who despised Seaton as a coward—the latter having left his ranks and skulked, after promising to join in the battle—was not indisposed to listen to Seot.

The end of it was that he gave Amy and the black their freedom.

Seaton, meanwhile, had not been unobservant of what was going on. Having a free range of the camp, he quitted it after midnight, determined to lie in wait for the black and Amy to shoot the latter with his rifle, and flee from the country leaving the girl to shift for herself in the wilderness.

Having lost the love of the maiden, he knew it were useless to endeavor to win it back. This he had vainly tried during the march.

The morning dawned bright and cloudless. Amy and the black quitted the Apache camp, and at once journeyed toward their destination.

"It am a long way we hab to travel," remarked Job; "but I hab perwision enuff to las' awhile," tapping, as he spoke, a bag over his shoulders, containing dried venison, some bear's meat, and other articles of diet, procured at the camp.

In about half an hour, the two reached a path, leading through tangled masses of brushwood.

Ahead of them, a few yards from the path, there was a rock about fifteen feet in hight. In the top of it there was a cleft skirted by bushes.

Seaton having noted the direction taken by the two, had, by a roundabout way, gained the rock, and clambering it, ensconced himself in the cleft, thus commanding the path.

As the two approached, he pointed his rifle at the head of the black, and pulled the trigger.

The weapon missed fire!

The click of the piece caught the quick ear of the black, who glanced up, to see the shining barrel of the weapon.

Seizing Amy by the shoulder, he dragged her into the shrubbery, crouching down and drawing her to his side.

"De Lord hab mercy on us!" he whispered; "dere's danger ahead!"

In hurried words, he explained; then crouching still lower, crept cautiously toward the rock, having first drawn Amy to his side, and bade her remain there until his return.

Seaton, owing to the density of the shrubbery, could not guess what the negro was doing; but supposed he still remained concealed where he had disappeared.

He pointed his rifle toward the spot, but hesitated to fire, fearful that his bullet might miss one whom he could not see.

Meantime Job kept on, cautiously and swiftly approaching the rock, intending to pounce upon the rifeman unawares and snatch his weapon. Seaton, however, soon heard the rustling noise he made, glanced in that direction, and saw the woolly head.

His rifle was again leveled.

Bang! went the piece, the bullet just grazing the top of the negro's head, sending chunks of his wool flying through the air.

Job fell prostrate, pretending he was dead. Seaton, deceived, bounded from the rock and hurried away, soon disappearing in the shrubbery.

Job waited a reasonable time, then rejoined Amy.

The latter, learning it was Seaton who had fired, now experienced feelings of horror and disgust toward the man whom she had lately thought she loved.

The two continued on their way.

"Pity me lose dem hosses ob ours," said Job. "Nebber see'd 'em after de battle, nor de dog either. Guess de hosses run away somewhere, and was captured by de Apache scouts, which hab not come to de camp yet."

About noon the sun was obscured. Dense masses of clouds covered the sky, rushing along and foreboding a tempest. Flashes of light, like red spears, were seen shooting up from the crater of Starry Mountain, which the two wanderers now were rapidly approaching. Soon the clouds, growing heavier,

came rolling half-way down the rugged elevation. The thunder rolled, the lightning flashed.

The black, seizing the hand of the young girl, helped her up the steep ascent.

They had not mounted fifty feet, when the rain came rushing down in torrents. The black now darted into the hollow formed by two overhanging rocks, leading the girl after him. Here they were sheltered from the rain, and could obtain a good view of the storm.

The wind blew almost a hurricane; trees were bent nearly double or torn up by the roots; the air was full of driving scud; the lightning played, the thunder crashed almost incessantly.

Suddenly there was a din as if a hundred bolts had fallen; the lightning had struck and shattered a huge rock far above on the height; one of the fragments came rolling down the steep declivity, passing close to where the two travelers were sheltered. Finally it rolled against the opening, completely closing it.

"We are prisoners!" cried Amy, aghast. "God help us!"

The negro, with eyes protruding wildly, glanced around him.

He saw a narrow passage, which had at first escaped his attention. This seemed to lead right into the heart of the mountain.

Bidding Amy await his return, Job entered the passage and crept cautiously forward. Soon he came to a turn; there was a light ahead.

"Dat's it!" he exclaimed, joyfully, and returning related his discovery.

"De passage winds; de light I saw am probably de outlet. We go dere if you like, Miss Amy."

They started. As they approached the light it seemed to grow brighter—it almost dazzled them. There was a strange lurid tint to it, and they thought they could distinguish a hissing, rumbling sound.

On they went, but suddenly paused, feeling in their faces a heat as from a furnace.

Amy would go no further: the negro proceeded.

Soon he gained the spot where the light glared, when he

uttered an exclamation. He was standing upon the edge of what seemed a FATHOMLESS PIT OF FIRE!

Far beneath him burned the flames of a volcano; red, blue and white—the waves of fire surging hither and thither, hissing, roaring and crackling.

“De Lord pity us!” he exclaimed, returning to Amy. “We am on de brink ob Starry Mountain volcano!”

“Still worse, we are PRISONERS HERE!” gasped Amy.

Again the negro crept to the brink of the fiery lake.

Glancing far upward, he could see the chimney or crater of Starry Mountain.

There it was, a hundred feet above his head, but not to be reached from this point by mortal man! The walls of the interior of the cavity, blackened by smoke and flame, were as smooth as the sides of a new well, so that to scale them was impossible.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ESCAPE.

As may be imagined, Eleah had not been so many days a prisoner among the Apaches, without now and then obtaining a view of Amy Wilson, who, she knew, from what Isaonie had said, was the counterpart of the White Spirit of the Canoe!

A feeling much like hate animated her bosom against the girl, whom she looked upon as the cause—unwittingly it is true—of the woes which had fallen upon her so thick and fast.

Neosho, oh, Neosho!

With his fathers in the happy land was the young, bright child of her heart!

Isaonie, too!—a doomed captive among his enemies.

With bowed head sat Eleah in the lodge where she was held captive, on the night fixed for her husband's death.

At length the news of Isaonie's safety for the present, brought about by the mad Seot, reached her.

Hope for her brave husband animated her *Losom*. She must see the madman; she must speak to him—he should be the means of saving her from becoming the wife of Black Feather—of also enabling her husband to escape.

Chance brought about a meeting between her and Seot, sooner than she had expected. The Black Feather, when the madman reached his lodge, addressed him thus:

“If my prophet brother is in league with the Manitou, he can do great things. He can make love—can soften the heart of the Mexican Flower, so that she will come to his wigwam!”

“Ho! ho! who is the Mexican Flower?”

“Her name is *ELEAH*. She has stolen the spirit of Black Feather; he can not live unless she come to his wigwam and bring it back to him!”

“*ELEAH*!” screamed Seot, and started, clapping a hand to his brow.

That name to the madman’s brain, as the sun to the mist, seemed to clear his mind. Recollection dawned upon him! Dimly it came, gathering force every moment. The whirlpool of his insanity was partially broken; he was less of a madman than before.

“And where is *Eleah*?”

“In the Black Feather’s camp. The light of her beauty hangs over it! Her voice is a bird’s; her power makes thunder in the chief’s heart!”

“I will go to her! Yes—yes, I will go and try to soften her heart; I *will* soften it!”

“The prophet is great; his words make Black Feather’s heart sing! Oh, prophet, give him the Mexican Flower, and his heart shall sing forever!”

Seot was shown to *Eleah*’s lodge. The Indian guard made way for him respectfully. He remained an hour, then returned to Black Feather.

“The chief would win the free will of the Mexican Flower?”

“Yes.”

“I will tell him how. I must first take the Flower to the Manitou and hold counsel with him. He will help me soften the heart of *Eleah*! Ho, ho! do you understand?”

"The prophet shall do as he says."

"It is well."

"When will you go to the Manitou with Eleah?"

"To-morrow, when the sun goes down red and laughing, in a sea of fire!"

Accordingly at the appointed time, the storm having subsided, Seot conducted Eleah away from the Apache camp. The Black Feather, in spite of his faith, followed at a distance, with half a dozen of his warriors, keeping the two in sight. In fact, his curiosity was much excited to see the wonderful doings of the prophet. He feared, also, that Eleah might contrive to escape from her conductor, in which case he would be on hand to pursue and overtake.

The warriors had not proceeded far when ahead of them, approaching, they beheld their long-absent scouts, on their way back to camp, having in their possession the three splendid horses which had belonged to Seaton, Amy and Job.

The two parties meeting, the scouts halted with the others on an elevated mound, affording them a partial view of Seot and his companion, who had now entered a small copsewood about a mile distant.

While still watching them, the captured horses became unmanageable, and suddenly breaking unexpectedly from those who held them, dashed madly toward the Apache camp.

Entering it, they overturned three lodges, the one containing Isaonie being among the number. As his guards dodged back out of the way of the coursers' hoofs, the Comanche, suddenly grasping one by the bridle, vaulted upon its back, directing it away from the camp!

So sudden was the movement, that the guard were entirely taken by surprise.

When they recovered, there were horse and rider, stretching away toward the far horizon at a tremendous rate.

A shower of arrows whistled after him, but missed. One of them, however, passed through his red and white plume, sending half of it flying.

The escape was observed by those who were watching Seot and Eleah, and some of them, mounted on their fleet steeds, instantly were sent by Black Feather in pursuit. Away they went, and soon became mere specks in the far distance.

Meanwhile the chief, in no amiable mood at what had happened, watched with keen eyes Seot and Eleah, who now were nearly shrouded from view in the thick shrubbery of the copsewood. Beyond this there was a broad plain covered with long, waving grass, seven feet high.

Black Feather, seeing the two disappear, now hurried forward, motioning to his warriors to follow.

Suddenly a cry of rage escaped him. The prophet was a pretender and liar. There, far beyond the grass, through which he and Eleah must have crawled on their hands and knees, the two were seen fleeing away toward the Starry Mountain.

The sun was long down, the shadows of night were gathering. Black Feather held a brief consultation with his warriors, who then separating, so as to flank the fugitives, started in pursuit.

Eleah and Seot fled with the speed of winged deer. Striking into the same path taken by Amy and Job, they found themselves at midnight standing at the foot of the Starry Mountain.

The pursuers had pressed them close. Once a party had come within a hundred feet of them, the outlines of their forms showing indistinctly through the gloom! Then Eleah and Seot, crouching low, had waited until their enemies passed.

Just as they gained the foot of the mountain, they beheld either another or the same party crouching in the shadow of a rock not twenty feet to the left of them!

There was a yell—the fugitives were seen!

Then it was that Seot gave proof of the extraordinary strength and agility which madmen have been known to exhibit.

Seizing Eleah by the arm, he sped up the steep ascent with her, dragging her along as if she were a mere feather! Still the pursuers gained fast. Exhausted, Eleah had sunk upon a rock—their capture seemed certain, their enemies being less than ten feet below, when the glance of Seot fell upon a fragment of loose rock near where he stood.

This fragment was the other half of the huge mass which had been rent in twain by the thunderbolt during the storm,

the other part, as shown, having closed over the cave containing Amy and Job. Loosely balanced, trembling at a touch, the fragment had caught against a spur, near the very edge of a protruding shelf. This the keen eyes of Seot, familiarized to the darkness, easily detected.

He perceived also that the pursuers were directly under it.

"Ho ! ho !" screamed the madman, "take that, you fiends ! The Mexican Flower shall never be yours !"

So saying, he pushed the fragment over.

There was a terrific crash—a yell of pain—the rock rolled on, followed by the mangled forms of two of the Indians, numbering four in all. The two others paused, appalled, which gave time to the fugitives.

On they sped. There was a yell behind them—the pursuit was recommenced.

With desperate strength Seot dragged Eleah up, half buried in snow, near the edge of the crater of the Starry Mountain !

The light from the opening showed all around it as clearly as day. The two Indians pursuing, paused as Eleah sprung to the very brink of the crater.

"Back !" she exclaimed, turning toward the Indians whom unarmed Seot had now faced—"back ! or Eleah springs into the fiery depths below !"

The whitish exhalations from the crater, floating over her, seemed to weave a halo round her beautiful head.

There she stood, balancing herself on one foot, her form drawn up, her lip curling, her dark eyes flashing.

How could Isaonie ever have been tempted to leave this superbly handsome creature for the White Phantom of the canoe ?

Seot stretched his hand toward her.

"No ! no !" he shrieked ; "oh, no ! The Mexican Flower must not be scorched in the red fire !"

"Hush ! touch me not !" she cried. "Death before the wigwam of the Black Feather !"

Nearer still to the crater ! She was now ON ITS EXTREME EDGE ! Great God ! if it should *crumble beneath her feet !*"

The two Indians stood undecided.

Not so the devoted Seotitlan. Fearful that Eleah would fall into the terrible red depths of the abyss of fire, he threw an arm around her, holding her firmly.

This decided the Indians, who now sprung upon the two. Perceiving his error too late, the half-witted Mexican, now letting go his hold of Eleah, grappled with his opponents!

The madman struggled desperately; Eleah vainly endeavored to interpose.

One of the Indians had drawn his tomahawk; Seot sprung back to avoid it. This brought him to the very edge of the crater. His opponents now sprung upon him; he lost his balance, and throwing out his arms, caught each of the Apaches by the hair of the head, pulling them toward him with all his strength.

This kept him a brief instant above the yawning crater; the next the rock crumbled beneath his feet, and down he went—down—down into the fiery abyss, dragging both natives with him.

There was a wild scream from the Indians—a prolonged cry from poor Seot:

“ELEAH!”

The next moment the three forms were swallowed up in the jaws of the volcano!

Job and Amy, in the cave beneath the crater, had seen those three forms descend—had heard the screams of the doomed! Now glancing up, they beheld peering down through the opening, the beautiful face of the anguish-stricken Eleah.

They called to her. She heard their voices and looked amazed; but it was plain she could not see them.

A red mist ever seemed to float between the interior of the crater and the vision of the spectator above.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY.

MR. WILSON and his nephew following the trail, lost it when, after long tramping, they came to the banks of the Rio Grande.

"Water!" exclaimed Frank, delightedly; "thank fortune we have come at last upon something besides swamp or rivulet!"

Unable to find a canoe, they were obliged to cross on a log, which, by dint of hard paddling, they managed to get over.

Now, however, they vainly looked for any trace of the moccasin: THE TRAIL WAS LOST!

They kept on, however, and at length found themselves within about three miles of the Starry Mountain.

Suddenly they were startled by the sound of hoofs, and soon, bursting upon their sight, came the Black Feather, dashing along like the wind, still in search of Eleah.

So intent was he upon his object, that he heeded them not, and was soon lost to view in the distance.

The travelers had not proceeded much further, when an exclamation from the old man attracted the attention of his nephew.

"Behold!" cried Mr. Wilson, wildly; "here is something precious—a clue worth finding."

Frank perceived that the old man held up something. He advanced and inspected it. It proved to be a small locket containing a miniature likeness of Frank, who, when a boy, had, before going to sea, presented this as a gift to his pretty cousin Amy.

"Ah, she has kept it ever since," he muttered, his cheek glowing with delight. "Oh, uncle, uncle, this proves that we are on the right track, after all!"

The old man, examining the ground attentively, soon made out the marks of Job's great cowhide shoes.

He followed them a short distance, when he lost them in the long grass, recently displaced by the storm.

While vainly endeavoring to regain the clue, both men were suddenly startled by a faint wail.

They paused and listened : the sound was not repeated.

Hurrying, then, in the direction whence it had proceeded, they finally came upon a little child, lying upon its face among the bushes.

They turned it over, to recognize the familiar lineaments of Neosho ! The eyes were open, but there was little expression in them ; the face was colorless, the lips half parted ; the dress, soiled, wet and muddy, showed that the poor thing had been exposed to the storm.

"It is dead !" cried Frank.

"No, nephew, not dead, but it must have been if left here many hours longer."

The old man drew a flask of brandy from his pocket, and forced some of the liquor down the child's throat.

It revived—color came to its cheeks—its eyes shone.

The old man caught it up, and moved forward with it to a rock containing a hollow—the same in which Seaton had ensconced himself to fire upon Job.

"Frank, get me some fresh water ; I must bathe this poor child," said Mr. Wilson.

The young man unfastened his canteen from his shoulder, and departed at once in search of a stream.

Soon he saw the gleam of a little rill about fifty yards to the left of the rock.

Thither he bent his steps, when suddenly his foot struck against something in the shrubbery.

He glanced down, to behold an old Indian woman lying upon her side in a pool of blood. Her eyes were glazing fast—she was dying—a bullet had pierced her side.

That bullet was the one which Seaton had discharged at Job, on the day when he left the Apache camp.

Frank kneeled by the woman's side, and laid his hand on her heart, to perceive that it beat faintly.

"Water !" gasped the sufferer. "Minnalo must die ! Her Great Father calls ! She will see her little pappoose, killed by dog of Comanche !"

Instantly a thought flashed upon the brain of Frank. He brought and gave water to the old woman, then asked if she

was the one who had carried off the little Comanche Neosho.

"Yes; found in cave; wanted to dash out brains. Looked at face: face too much like ELEAH'S—Mexican Flower, who once gave eat to Minnalo's little pappoose when hungry. This why not kill. Bring away—passing here, bullet strike. Minnalo fall—little Comanche child crawl away. Hear cry but could not go—blood run too fast and—"

Minnalo could say no more. Her head fell back, her jaws collapsed—she was dead.

Frank hurried to his uncle, informing him of what he had seen.

When Mr. Wilson had relieved the child he proceeded to the spot, and looked at the woman, lying there so cold and still.

"Yes," he said, pointing at her feet, "those are the moccasins which left the prints we were in search of. Others have been here," he added, narrowly inspecting the bushes.

These seemed to be displaced all along in the direction of the Starry Mountain. In some quarters the storm had partially obliterated, without entirely destroying, these traces.

"Look!" cried the old man, suddenly pointing toward the mountain; "I am certain I just now beheld a form emerge from behind that spur of rock!"

Frank, however, could see nothing. In fact, the figure had now turned an angle of the rock, hiding it from sight.

"We must go thither!" exclaimed the old man; "unless I am mistaken, the form I saw was a female's. Something tells me that we will there find her whom we seek."

At this, Frank trembled all over for joy.

"We will start now!" he exclaimed.

"No, wait awhile," answered the old man. "I do not know as it will be well for us to show ourselves just now. Behold! Perhaps if *they* saw us they might give us trouble."

He pointed far away where the dusky forms of hundreds of warriors, emerging from the heart of thick clumps of trees skirting the base of the mountains, were seen hurrying rapidly on toward the smoke from the fires of the Apache camp.

Soon the sounds of conflict were borne to their ears.

The Comanches, after their defeat, had rallied, adding

hundreds to their standard, and marched to avenge themselves upon their enemies.

It was the Comanches and Apaches who were now fighting.

The combat was even more desperate than the previous one. For hours our two friends listened to the horrible clamor. Finally it ceased. The Apaches, routed, were fleeing toward the great ocean.

Isaonie was again among his warriors. He had met then while hurrying on, a fugitive upon the faithful steed. Now, while his comrades were shouting and dancing jubilantly, the Silent Stream sat apart from the rest. His heart was heavy in his bosom.

Where was Eleah?—where the body of his poor Neosho?

He rose and remounted his steed. Several other well-mounted warriors joined him, when he made known his purpose to go in search of his wife. Just then several Comanches appeared, leading a white man.

It was Seaton!

He had been found, hurrying along, miles from the camp. Isaonie ordered him to be kept a prisoner, then departed in search of his wife.

Where was the latter at this moment? In the cave with the negro and Amy. On hearing the voices, she had descended, as the two had directed her, to the closed mouth of the cave in which they were imprisoned.

With a stout pole for a lever, Job knew that he could force back the rock which closed the entrance. He requested Eleah to procure him one.

She complied—a brief search rewarded her with a tough branch of cedar.

Lopping off the branches with a knife thrust out to her by the negro through a crevice, she, through the same crevice, passed the stake to the black. He seized it, and after tugging at the rock for some time, succeeded in displacing it sufficiently to admit a human body.

Eleah then entered the cave, to behold the counterpart of the vision of the WHITE CANOE, as described to her by her husband in the person of Amy Wilson! Her eyes flashed anger—her lips curled. Jealousy and rage were in her

bosom. Here was the unwitting cause of all her woes, the loss of her bright Neosho, and as she feared, of the heart of her husband!

"Come!" cried Job. "Golly! 'Spec's you's had hard time since dis nigger see you last. Come in!"

Eleah, however, moved not. Her eyes glittered brighter and brighter—her teeth were set—her hand closed tightly over the knife Job had given her.

Suppose she killed the white girl! Then she would never again cross her husband's path!

An instant she felt tempted to do the deed; then, reflecting that Amy was innocent of the mischief she had done, the beautiful Mexican threw the knife to the ground, and turning, descended the mountain.

"Golly, what dis mean? Come back! come back! You say you fly from Apache! Apache catch, if you don't hide in dis cave wid us!"

"Eleah can not accept shelter with the woman who has robbed her of her husband's—"

She could say no more—her utterance was choked, but with a proud wave of the hand, she vanished round the angle of a rock.

She kept on, and had nearly gained the foot of the mountain, when through the shrubbery she beheld horsemen approaching!

She perceived they were Indians, and at first feared they were her enemies. Soon she discovered her mistake; she recognized her husband, mounted on the foremost horse.

With a glad cry, she darted forward, when Isaonie, springing from his horse, clasped her to his bosom.

1 Explanations ensued.

Isaonie turned aside his face to conceal his emotion when Eleah spoke of the WHITE LADY.

"Come," said the Mexican, "come away!"

She was anxious to draw her husband from the vicinity of Amy Wilson.

Soon the two reached the camp.

It was now determined that Seaton, lashed to one of the horses, should accompany Isaonie and Eleah, and eventually be given up to the custody of the whites.

While the warrior was busy lashing the helpless Seaton, Mazeppa-like, upon the horse, a party of warriors came in, leading a prisoner.

It was Frank Merton, who had been captured on his way to the Starry Mountain!

"The Comanches are at peace with the pale-faces!" said Isaonie. "The pale-face should have been permitted to go his way."

One of the warriors then stated that he thought perhaps the man was a spy employed by some of the Mexicans.

"Ay, ay, now!" exclaimed Frank, "that's a mistake. I sail under no false colors. I'm Frank Merton, do you see, plain Frank and nothing else!"

Eleah, who had been surveying the young man attentively, now advanced and confronted him.

He started, recognizing her at once as the same he had seen in the Hunter's Rest; the mother of Neosho!

"The Mexican has seen the pale-face before!" said Eleah.

"Ay, ay, of course she has! This is the mother of Neosho?"

"Yes," moaned Eleah, "the child has been torn from her spirit; he is gone to the Happy Land!"

"Begging your pardon, it's no such thing!"

"What does the white-face mean?" queried Isaonie and Eleah, in a breath.

"Hip! hip! hooray!" cried Frank, joyously, as he waved his cap round his head. "Why, bless your eyes, the child is safe and well! I left my uncle in a cave, not far from here, nursing your little craft, which is getting along ship-shape!"

"He lives! Neosho lives!" screamed Eleah, clapping her hands. "Oh, Isaonie! Isaonie! listen!"

"My pale-face brother has come to us like a bright light!" cried the Indian. "He brings good tidings! Is he sure of what he says?"

In a few words, Frank explained all.

"We have but a few miles to go to reach them. There is, however, a wide stream or river to cross before we get there, from this point."

He then described the exact situation of the rock.

The Indian smiled.

For hundreds of miles around he knew the country well. From childhood he had explored these wild territories.

By this time the sun was gone down.

"Come," said Eleah, "the moon is rising!"

"Before its edge shines above the rock," replied Isaonie, pointing toward a tall spire-like projection on Starry Mountain, "Eleah will have Neosho in her arms!"

Mounting horses, the little party set out, consisting of Elcab, Isaonie, Frank, and Seaton; the latter securely bound to a horse, which followed with the Indian holding the rein. The way was but a buffalo-path, made by those wonderful animals in their singular annual migration across the great prairie wilderness in search of fresh pasture and water; but the Indian knew that it led into an open plain, across which, by fording a river, there was a short way to the cave of the Hunter's Rest.

The horses being fresh, and the way clear, the pace at which they went was tremendous, and half an hour brought them clear of the forest. They were silent. Isaonie, wrapped in gloomy thought, his vagrant love all fled into thin air before the touchstone of his child's illness, was seeking to explain to himself the secret of his having, for the first time in his life, abandoned his happy home; while the fact, too, that with his absence had come woe and sickness, despair, perhaps death, worked upon him until he gnashed his teeth in very agony of grief, that his own folly and hotheadedness should have caused so much of ill. Eleah, her wandering mind wholly restored, and with her husband by her side, coursing with the burning thirst of hope on his lips to where lay his infant child, dwelt only on the cherub face which she had left behind, as it were in the very agony of dissolution. The faint glimmer of faith in God's goodness, which makes us all think, in time of tribulation, that *we* should specially be favored, carried to her heart the cherished comfort that, during her absence, there might have been a change for the better.

As she rode along, she half slept, or rather moved along musing to the sound of the thundering hoofs of the panting horses.

She was with her child, and its bright eyes

"Made sunshine in a shady place,"

light in the very shadow of death. It was smiling, and laughing, and making all infantine antics, such as mothers love to see; it was kicking, it was crowing, it was chirruping, as mothers love to hear; and a music, more divine than Israel's harps to the ears of her wandering children, came flooding her brain. Its eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and all its tiny limbs, danced in strange guise around, until the whole atmosphere seemed alive with children, romping, playing, running, all in merry guise, as if death had never come into the world, nor any woe were known upon the face of the green and happy universe. A chorus, such as angels sing, came home on the night air, and Eleah heard charmed sounds filling the tympanum, and penetrating to the very recesses of her brain; and the charming sound that made the life-blood tingle, and the heart leap, and the tears smart i' the eye, and the nostrils dilate, and the cheeks flush, was the simple words, "My mother!"

"On! on!" cried Eleah, with a cry of anguish, as she was roused to a sense of her sorrow, and beneath her well-tutored hands the courser flew as the wind.

By dint of brooding, Isaonie too had fallen into a dreamy state, and at length, as he rode along, he came to the banks of a pellucid and lovely lake, on which the moon was shedding floods of rich light; and he paused to water his horse, while Eleah and Seaton, whose horse the wife held, sped by him at a tremendous pace, and were speedily lost in the gloom of evening. Stillness came upon the warrior's heart—the spot, the dying fall of the wavelets on the shore, the gentle breathing of the trees, the fragrant odor of rich flowers, all combined to enthrall his heart, and then came, like

"Sabæan odors from the spicy shore,"

the sound of music on the waters.

Isaonie's heart leaped within him, for again was present the white lady of his dreams to his mind, and as he thought, his heart smote him, and he turned to follow where his wife was bounding with love-impelled speed to her child. But she was gone; he gazed afar off upon the plain, and he saw her not; he listened with keen ear, but he heard her not. And then, shrouded in music, came along the waters of the lake the White Stone Canoe. It was more lovely than ever. Its pure

and brilliant color shone in the moonlight with mysterious effulgence ; its pinky-edged oar moved slowly to the cadence of the wild Indian flute, giving forth melody consonant to the occasion.

The lady, too, was more commanding, more majestic in her presence, but he could not distinguish her features. She raised not her hands, nor gave him aught of welcome, though she came nearer and nearer each moment, impelled by the unworked paddles. Isaonie gazed with spell-bound eyes upon her form, and as she came closer to the shore saw that she bore something upon her knees. His heart leaped within him, for the canoe was not twenty yards from him, and then his vision caught sight, in the lap of the white lady, of a little child, sleeping in the calm innocence of youth—and death.

It was Neosho.

The warrior raised his face menacingly toward the woman, and for the first time discovered the mild, sorrowing, reproachful, but confiding countenance of his wife ; at the same time the whole vision vanished from before his eyes, and Isaonie dreamed the dream of the White Stone Canoe no more.

“ On ! on ! ” came to his ears from the lips of Eleah, and the reverie was past.

“ Stay, wife, Eleah, star of my soul ! ” cried the Indian, as he roused himself, and saw the peril in which the whole party unconsciously stood.

They had crossed the plain, and were upon the edge of a long sloping bank, which shelved down some hundred feet at a sharp angle into the river below, which, swollen by the recent rains, flew by, dark turbid, and with a roar which manifested its might and power. As Isaonie spoke he caught violently at the bridle of Eleah's horse, and drew both his and hers upon their haunches. His wife would have been thrown, had she not used her utmost skill to prevent it, during the exercise of which her husband's hand unconsciously lost hold of the reins of the animal which bore Seaton.

The beast, which liked not the awkward load lashed upon its back, reared and endeavored to cast Seaton from his posi-

tion, in which vain attempt it came to the very verge of the precipice, where the slimy substance which forms the banks of prairie rivers after storms commences. The rains having lasted some days had reduced the tough clay to the consistence of grease, and the animal's hind legs engaging in this, it came with a heavy fall to the ground.

"Save me! save me!" cried Seaton.

It was too late, for man and beast were sliding slowly down the inclined plane, which went to the very edge of the water, that, rushing by in its huge swelled volumes, appeared to yawn for its prey.

"Isaonie will save the pale-face," said Eleah, eagerly.

"Save me!" cried Seaton, faintly, as he saw he was nearing the edge of the river.

"It can not be; to put a moccasin on the bank were to ask the Manitou for death," replied the Indian firmly, and truthfully.

Seaton lay with his face half-smothered in mud, slowly gliding down the side of the bank, as his resistance to his further progress yielded to the weight and struggles of the furious beast.

"Give me a knife," cried the wretched man, "to cut these thongs—I can then save myself."

Quick as lightning Isaonie drew his long knife, and taking aim, launched it forth with unerring force, and sent it quivering in the bank to within a foot of Seaton's head. Snatching with eager hope at it, the terrified ruffian tried to cut the thongs which bound him. In vain. They were too many, and too complicated, and with a fierce yell he had to give up this idea of escape.

And still he neared the edge of the river, the horse kicking furiously, and making impotent attempts to rise, which but increased the rapidity of his motion down the slimy bank.

"Fiends above there, wil' you not save me? Good Indian, good wife, help me to escape this fearful death, and ye shall slay me in an hour!" he cried in tones of awful agony.

"It can not be," replied the Indian, gloomily, while Eleah veiled her eyes; "if Isaonie could he would."

He spoke truth ; any attempt to save the wretched man would have only precipitated him alongside the other into the turbid waters.

"A curse rest on you and yours, then !" shrieked Seaton, plunging his knife into the horse, in very wantonness of despair ; and then up came a yell as of a demon let loose, and all was over. In the raging flood fell horse and man, and away, away they flew, along the swollen river, vanishing from the eyes of the horror-stricken pair in the gathering gloom.

"Come," said Eleah, shuddering ; "our child."

Away they sped again in silence, the horses, which had been breathed by the pause, dashing forward at their will with renewed vigor. A ride of about a mile brought them to the ford, where the waters of the stream widened considerably, becoming shallower, and where the bank had been beaten down by the passage of innumerable buffaloes, that for ages past had made it a hereditary highway to the hills.

"In a short time the moon will shine behind the rock," said Eleah, sadly.

"And a mother will see her child," replied the warrior.

"What is that, father of Neosho ?" cried the wife, pointing to a black object in the stream, and toward which they were approaching.

Isaonie replied only by urging his horse faster, and next moment they were beside the floating and swollen corse of the unfortunate beast which had perished. And there, his face upturned, his eyes awfully prominent, his hand clenching the knife which he had plunged into the horse's side, lay all that remained of the once gay, thoughtless, and lately guilty Richard Seaton.

On he swept, still bound in death to his once-faithful beast of burden—floating in body toward the great ocean ; in soul, where the infinite mercy and goodness of his Creator alone could say.

Gloomily parting from this memento of their past eventful hours, on sped the earnest, hoping pair, and in half an hour more were within a few minutes' ride of the cave containing Neosho.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF ALL.

THE mother and father, as they came to the verge of the wood, held their breath, while unconsciously their hands met, and were clasped, as if they could have crushed any mortal thing which came in their way. Eleah was first, dragging her husband forward, as it were, in her burning haste. She knew the spot where *he* lay, and her eyes were fixed in one long stare to catch the first loved glance, or to seize the awful fiat which wrung from her hope on earth.

Isaonie was even, perhaps, more deep-set in his anguish than she; he knew that all this came of his dreamy folly, of his strange fancy with regard to the White Lady of the White Stone Canoe, that, acting on his fervid imagination, had driven him from home and family, and he shuddered to think that possibly his child was dead.

Why start then suddenly both? Why does a heavenly beam of light rush crimson over the face of joyous Eleah? Why does the unbidden, unasked, but not unwelcome tear, find current down the warrior's tanned cheeks?

They have seen nothing, they have not passed the threshold of the wood.

But, oh! bringing glad tidings to their hearts, on the damp night air, joyous, merry, though faint, was a cherub laugh which mother and father knew right well.

Gently tearing herself from the arms of the warrior, who never before had been guilty of such an Indian weakness Eleah, after giving him a spontaneous and earnest embrace—in which not only lip met lip, but heart, heart—rushed forth, followed in more solemn style by her grave but rejoicing husband.

On a pile of grass, the white man gazing on with much satisfaction, sat the infant, upright, merry, eating—pale and thin, it is true, but the disease gone before the white man's tedious but powerful remedies—the little Neosho. With

the constitution of his race, no sooner had his frame driven forth the disease itself, but nature revived within him; and he was now, with a vigor wonderful after his late illness, making up apparently for that waste of time which, to judge by his present appetite, the child seemed to consider most ill-judged and injudicious.

"Neosho! Neosho!" cried the happy mother, bursting in glad interruption on the group.

The little child, hearing its mother's voice—a voice dear and familiar to its ear—seemed doubly roused; and to show its satisfaction, thrust the food it held hurriedly into its mouth, and stretched forth its freed hands to greet her.

"Neosho!" again cried the joyous mother, clasping the infant in her arms, "see where your father comes—see!"

Isaonie now stood by her, and, careless of the bystanders, took the child tenderly into his arms, and, entering the cavern, vanished from their sight. In what unrestrained joy the reunited father there indulged we know not, for none interrupted him. In a few minutes he returned, and, handing Neosho to its mother, seated himself by the fire.

"Pale-face," said he, "the heart of Isaonie is glad; he must thank the medicine-man for watching over his child. The wigwam of the Indian is far off: it is lined with rich furs; there is much corn in the field. It is all Isaonie has, but all that is his is now the medicine-man's of the whites."

"Thanks, Indian," said the old man; "but I require no reward. I am, however, rejoiced to see you and your wife so happy."

"Isaonie has been a fool!" sternly continued the warrior; "but his heart is full of the story, and he will tell it."

The chief, then, without pausing, commenced his narration with that eventful day on which the relation of our record of his fortunes opens. He told his whole story; not, it was manifest, for the information of the others, but to clear himself with his wife, by explaining the supposed supernatural character of his tempter. His tale was told with wonderful delicacy and tact; and except where he glossed over, with pardonable haste, his feeling on finding her of real flesh and blood, with perfect truth. He went not so far, however, without interruption.

"Indian," exclaimed the old man, when he came to that part in his narrative which introduced the negro, "what manner of man was this?"

Isaonie described him.

"Stay, nephew," cried the other, as the young man would have asked other questions; "let him go on. I burn with anxiety."

The chief continued, and came to his arrival at the camp.

"Isaonie and the black-skin entered the camp at the fountain, and there—"

"You found my child!" exclaimed the old man, in a paroxysm of grief.

"Isaonie did; but let the white man hear."

He did, and in a few moments came to the end of the narrative, when the young man started to his feet.

"Where is the ruffian, the monster, that I may take his life?"

"The Manitou has taken him."

The old man started back in horror.

"You have not slain him, Indian, as this hasty and intemperate boy would have done?" said the old man, severely.

"He was drowned!" replied the chief, solemnly. "Isaonie is free from his blood!"

Eleah, who in silence had listened to all that was said, was now heard to speak.

"The child of the medicine-man is not far from here. She is in a cave in the Starry Mountain!"

"What? My child! my child!" exclaimed the old man, joyfully. "Oh, Frank, do you hear this?"

The young sailor sprung to his feet, cheering heartily.

General and more full explanations ensued, and the young sailor, whose memory had come back to Amy, as a feeling of right and a fit state of mind eradicated Seaton from it, would have started at once. But Isaonie, who vouched for the complete security of the fugitives, hesitated about parting from his wife and child that night, especially as the horses they had ridden required rest. Mr. Wilson, who had long since schooled his own wishes and desires so as not to bear down those of others, though eager for his child's presence, yet

from consideration for the animals and the Indian, forebore to press the point, and soon after retired to rest.

The young sailor, more impatient in his desires, and burning to see and ingratiate himself with his cousin, whom he had never forgotten, retired also, after no great lapse of time, having spent the interim in questioning the attentive Comanche, as far as their imperfect manner of understanding one another would permit, as to the appearance of Amy. Isaonie, glancing uneasily at his wife, who was now suckling her half-sleeping charge, was remarkably taciturn on this point.

Presently, however, all was still.

Eleah and Isaonie were now alone, and long and anxiously did they talk, and many and oft were the kind words and endearments which passed between them, and much did they say of the mercy which had spared Neosho. It was a happy reunion, in which Eleah acted as if he had been out on a long hunt, and told him merely how his child missed him, and how at eventide there was no merry laugh for the returned father, no gambols with his bow and arrows, no pulling and tugging at his war-plume; and Isaonie, warmed by her tenderness, awoke his slumbering energies, and described his strange sensations on meeting the black.

He told, with a smile, of his numerous foolish dreams, of his first meeting, of his second, and of the last, with the White Lady.

"And the last White Lady was Eleah?" said the wife, with a demure laugh.

"She was very like her," replied the warrior, half slyly.

"Was she not more fair?" inquired the young mother.

"Never did the eyes of Isaonie see any thing mortal so lovely," said the chief, "except—"

"The pale-faced girl of the whites," put in the Indian mother.

"No! Isaonie was speaking of Eleah."

"Can my warrior say," asked she, after a lengthened pause, during which her head had found a resting-place upon her husband's shoulder, and as if a strange idea had struck her, "if the black man has a squaw?"

"Isaonie asked him the question," replied the chief, shaking

his head as if he had his doubts, "but the woolly-head said he was of a people who were all black, and who worked for the whites."

Thus, in talk, did they consume part of the night, as all are wont to do after a brief absence; while, on the present occasion, it served to wear away the memory of the painful things which had agitated their minds for days past.

Husband and wife, both sorely fatigued, at length yielded to the influence of the hour, and wearied nature sought repose in sleep.

The whole party were, however, astir at early dawn, and after a hasty meal the father and cousin departed, guided by the Indian, in search of the truant daughter. The journey was performed with rapidity, and long before midday the cave was reached by the anxious party. As they neared the spot, Mr. Wilson grew stern in mien, a cloud settled on his brow, and big drops of cold perspiration stood upon his temples.

"Nephew," said he, "go forward. Tell my child I come, and tell her—no—I will go myself. Why should I hesitate to meet my babe, though she be guilty and false? Come to thy father's arms, my child, let all the world else prove foul and repelling to thee."

With these words Mr. Wilson motioned the others back, and then, darting through the opening, entered the cave, and stood within a few yards of his daughter, who, pale and thoughtful, was that very instant dwelling on the happy home she had left.

"Golly! Golly!" cried Job, slapping his thigh in an ecstasy of delight; "well, I nebber 'spect dis come 'bout."

"My father!"

"My child!"

With these words, the parent, and his weeping, but half smiling, laughing daughter were wrapped in one another's arms. One glance, one look, and they were reunited.

"Berry good," said Job, chuckling; "now him some chance ob go back, lib on mush and hom'ny 'stead of horse, I 'spec'; and ole Job see him son Sip, I reck'n."

"Amy! Amy!" said the father, "how could you leave us thus?"

"Father," replied Amy, earnestly, "believe me, the only happy moment I shall ever know will be when you and my dear mother welcome me home again, and forgive your foolish child. I was worked upon, I was fascinated, I believed in the true and devoted love of that bold bad man—"

"You knew, Amy, we never should have opposed your deliberate choice," replied the father; "we loved you too much."

"I know it now; but he, for his own purpose, willed not so. He told me that he had been wild, had been dissipated, and that you would prevent our union. Once married—but oh! my father, I have paid dearly for my fault. Let me speak of another; of that man I would hear no more—see him I—"

"You never will, Amy; God has provided against that."

"What mean you, father?"

"He is dead."

"Dat Ingine a 'spectable gen'l'man, I conclude," said Job; "so he knock him on de head."

"Job," replied Mr. Wilson, "he died by no man's hand. He perished in the raging flood; let him be forgiven and forgotten by us."

Amy stood shocked, horror-struck; but her nerves had been already so tried that it influenced her not as it would once have done; and when presently her cousin came with crimson cheek and trembling and quivering lip to shake her by the hand, she even got up a smile to thank him for his devotion in thus attending on and accompanying her father in his long and painful journey.

"I am sure it was kind, very kind in you, Frank," said the girl.

"I would do more, much more for you, Amy," said the young man, timidly.

Amy blushed deeply, and her little truant heart began to hope again, as she turned to her father, and gave the full narrative of her adventures.

"Amy," said the young man, as Mr. Wilson at length moved away to converse earnestly and for some time with the negro; "Amy, have you forgotten the day when I used to call you my little wife?"

"No," was all she could answer, while tell-tale blushes came rushing o'er her face in radiant brightness.

"And may I hope," he timidly added, "that word may not prove a mere idle saying?"

"Frank," exclaimed Amy, "not now. Ask me not; this is too generous, when I forgot father, mother, you—all, to follow a man I never loved."

This was said vehemently and earnestly, and carried rich tidings to the lover's heart.

"Amy, I loved you as a boy; as a man I love you doubly. Give me a dear hope."

"Cousin," cried she, bursting into tears, "if I answer as my heart would have me, you and all the world would despise me."

"Why?" said he, eagerly, fearing he had some lingering memory of Seaton to hear of.

"Because, having fled my home, my country, with a man whom I now abhor, and whom no real tie of affection ever bound me to, I could, in twenty-four hours after his image had vanished wholly from my soul, listen to the addresses of another."

"That other your first lover, who for six years has lived on the memory of your affection," replied the young man, beseechingly.

"Frank," said Amy, bowing her head to hide her tears and blushes, "your devotion breaks my heart. I will confess that, until I met this man, until he poisoned my senses with his flattery and vows, I too did sometimes—"

She paused.

"Go on, Amy," said the delighted lover.

"No matter," she continued; "but, Frank, you have loved me long; you have come to attend an aged man on his miserable journey in the track of a worthless daughter. I feel I have no right to ask for the usual maidenly consideration and regard. I can not expect you to wait."

"Indeed, Amy," he exclaimed, "you mistake me."

"Nay, Frank, if you will accept the hand of one who is unworthy of you, who, however, will try to make up for the fault of her head, not her heart—cousin, dear cousin, I will be yours; but it must be years hence."

This was said firmly, distinctly, with tears coursing down her now pallid cheeks, as if she expected that her fault was one which he could not, would not, overlook. But Frank, who knew Seaton well, knew also that an artless, pure, innocent girl was the very person to be persuaded into fancying herself in love with one who left no seductive art, no false lure, no solemn vow, no measure untried, to take her heart by storm. He therefore received with perfect joy her ready acceptance of his hand, and could well understand that her heart had been his all the time.

In fact, though too young when she knew her cousin to bestow her affection upon him, Amy had, by often, as she grew up, dwelling on his name, come to think of him as her probable partner in life. Her parents, who loved him as a son, had encouraged the idea, and now he was present to plead for himself; no wonder, then, that the effect of early association had its power, and the chain, once rudely snapped asunder, was united at the precise point where it had, in early youth, been severed; no wonder that, spurning the image of her attempted betrayer, hearing the generous devotion of her sailor cousin,

“ —— won by the charm
Of goodness irresistible, and all
In sweet disorder lost, she blushed consent.”

Our narrative is now soon told to the very last point. The united party departed immediately for the cave, where Isaonie found his boy still further progressing toward amendment, under the soothing and devoted care of his mother. The Indians and whites next day started for Camp Comanche, where the whites were hospitably entertained. Their stay, however, was not long, as Amy's mother was yet to be consoled, and on the third day they departed. How the mother received her child, how in peace they dwelt together for a long year, how at the end of that time the sailor cousin claimed his blushing truant for a bride, we must leave to the imagination.

And Eleah and Isaonie?

The chief, bound more than ever to his devoted wife, was perhaps the highest beau ideal from that day of a Comanche husband, and Neosho grew to be a fine boy under the fostering care of the proud chief. There were lingering memories

awhile of events connected with the White Stone Canoe, but they gradually faded, and the Indian pair

“——flourished long in tender bliss, and reared

A numerous offspring, lovely like themselves,

And good, the grace of all the country round.”

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